Early American FURNITURE MAKERS

by

THOMAS H. ORMSBEE

With 122 illustrations

Early American Furniture Makers

By Thomas Hamilton Ormsbee.

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The author describes this as a social and biographical study. It is concerned, not so much with types of our early furniture, as with the men and the times that produced them. "Frequently," says Mr. Ormsbee, "we forget that our early American furniture was once new. We overlook the fact that it mirrors the economic, social, and political conditions of the time when it was made. It also bespeaks the character of the men who produced it."

Mr. Ormsbee's study leads him first of all to a consideration of the Pilgrim Century, and the furniture of so-called "Mayflower" type. He finds that John Alden himself, among others, was a cooper, and therefore skilled in woodworking. Some quite early and authentic pieces of furniture can be traced well back to this time. The story of the American Chippendales is likewise full of interest when placed in its historic setting. Without question, however, the one outstanding figure among our early cabinet makers was Duncan Phyfe, "the Great." He kept a shop for the select and discriminating in New York, when Washington as first President lived almost around the corner. Phyfe, indeed, lived here for over sixty years and was the last word in cabinet styles.

There are seven chapters in all this chatty book of furniture *causerie*. While not directed solely to the antique lover, it will give him many choice morsels of information. This is supplemented by an abundance of cuts and plates showing authentic pieces and styles. What more can the collector want?

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Early
American Furniture Makers

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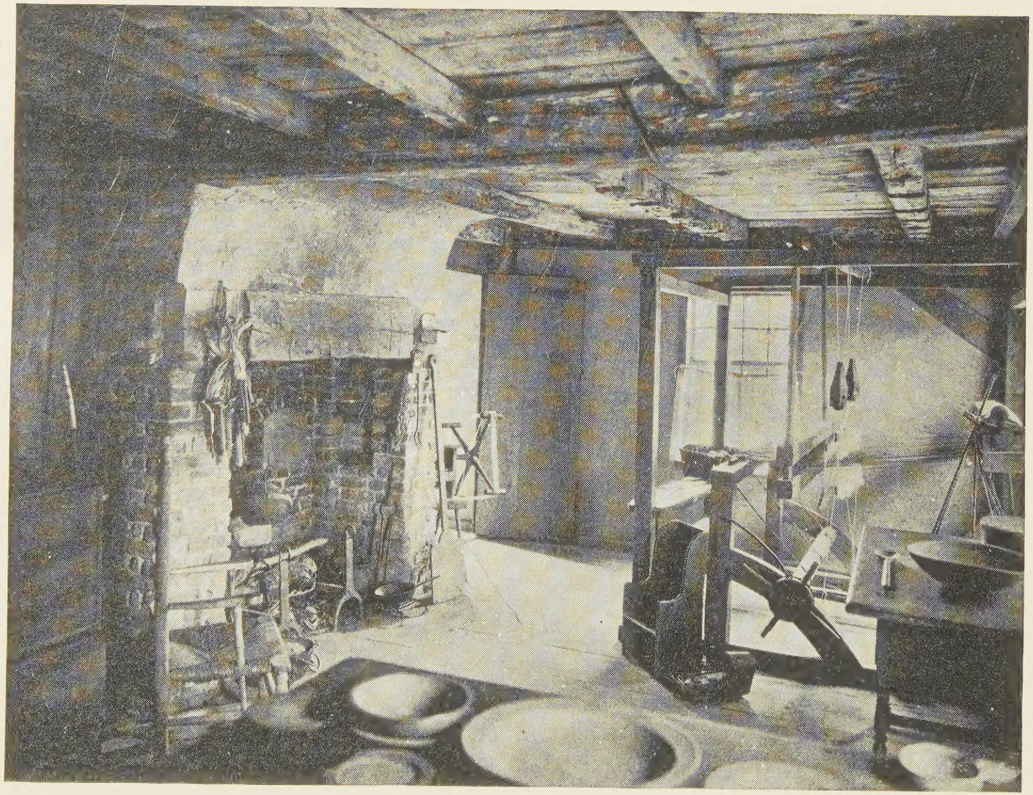

PLATE I.—AN EARLY PILGRIM INTERIOR. THE HARLOW HOUSE, PLYMOUTH, MASS.

Early American Furniture Makers

A Social and Biographical Study

By
THOMAS HAMILTON ORMSBEE

With 122 Illustrations

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To

RENÉE H. ORMSBEE

PREFACE

Frequently we forget that our Early American Furniture was once new. We overlook the fact that it mirrors the economic, social and political conditions of the time when it was made. It also bespeaks the character of the men who produced it. If this book gives its readers a glimpse of these conditions and something of the personality of these practitioners of the cabinet-making art, the author will have obtained his goal.

No claim is made that everything here is based on personal investigation. Where possible the author has hunted his own facts. In other instances he has made use of the research of others, endeavoring to give credit where this occurs.

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(Pilgrim Hall. Copyright A. S. Burbank, Plymouth, Mass.)

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(Metropolitan Museum of Art)

PLATE III.—THE ELDER BREWSTER CHAIR. OF CARVED OAK AND DATED ABOUT 1650.

(*Essex Institute*)

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CHAPTER I

THE PILGRIM CENTURY

FURNITURE history in the United States begins, not with Captain John Smith's company of gentlemen adventurers in Virginia nor with the Hollanders who swapped nineteen dollars worth of beads, hatchets and rum for Manhattan Island, but rather with the austere, nonconforming Englishmen who settled New England. It was they who brought the trade of furniture making from old England and in these new environs were, by 1675, making tables, chairs and chests of distinctly American design.

In fact, furniture making in New England can with certainty be said to date from that bleak December day in 1620 when the Pilgrim Fathers with their families, numbering one hundred persons all told, forsook the *Mayflower* and scrambled onto Plymouth Rock and dry land. Their ship was only of 120 tons burden and had to carry their provisions and supplies for the colonizing expedition as well as for two trips

across the uncharted Atlantic. The *Mayflower* was 82 feet long, 22 feet beam, and 14 feet from keel to main deck. Into her hold Christopher Jones, master of the ship, had to stow the casks of provisions, the supplies and the Pilgrim Fathers' chests of household gear.

What room was left for all the antiques that are now reputed to have come over in this historic vessel? The answer is obvious, likewise careful study of these reputed *Mayflower* relics discloses the majority to be either of American make or of English origin of a later date. But these very casks of food and drink, which precluded bringing much of any furniture, required under the Tunnage Acts then in force that somebody be aboard the ship who could make casks to be sent back on the return voyage. To comply, so that they might sail from Southampton, the Pilgrims added John Alden of "Speak for Yourself, John" fame to their number. He was a cooper of twenty-one years. This is how Governor William Bradford, in 1650, in his History of the Plymouth Settlement listed him:

"John Alden. Mr. Alden was hired at Southampton as a cooper. Being a likely young man he was desired as a settler; but it was left to his

own choice to stay or return to England; he stayed and married Priscilla Mullins."

Thus it happened that the first trained woodworker came to an English speaking colony on the American continent. Moreover, Alden prospered and seems to have devoted the 67 years before his death to office holding, farming, trading with the Indians and doing a little furniture making. Occasionally he is referred to in colonial records as a "joyner." This does not mean that he devoted himself to the affairs of Plymouth's Chamber of Commerce, Rotary club or lodge of Elks. Instead it was the style of the day for a man who did cabinet work.

Four years after the founding of Plymouth, Alden moved to Duxbury, eight miles from Plymouth. This was America's first suburban development. Here he cleared a farm of 169 acres and in 1653 built the house that is still standing. By 1665 Alden, after many years of membership in the Colonial council, was appointed deputy governor. Not bad for a man whose only reason for sailing on the *Mayflower* was to care for the casks of salt meat, beer and water. When he died he left 33 shillings worth of furniture, to wit, one table, one form (i.e.,

bench), one cupboard, two chairs, bedsteads, chests and boxes. Probably most of these pieces were of his own make but unfortunately none of them has survived that can be identified as genuine John Alden furniture. On the other hand, it is fairly safe to consider that what he did make was just about like the pieces of American furniture made prior to 1687, the year of his death.

John Alden was not the sole citizen of Plymouth trained to furniture making. About 1629 there arrived from the Old Country Kenelm Winslow, brother of Governor Edward Winslow who played such an important part in the affairs of the Pilgrims even from the days of the Leyden sojourn. Kenelm was one of the youngest of the five Winslow brothers all of whom left their native Droitwich in Worcestershire, England for the Plymouth settlement. He was born on April 29, 1599, and thus was thirty years old when he reached the New World. Evidently he had learned his trade in the homeland and did not adopt a new calling on reaching Massachusetts, for there is an entry dated January 6, 1633, in which he is styled "joyner." It also shows that he was prosperous enough to

have a helper for it concerns the indenture to him of Samuel Jenney as an apprentice.

Further study of this second Plymouth furniture maker discloses him to have been chosen, in 1640, town surveyor. The next year for neglect of highways he is fined ten shillings. Then he quit Plymouth and betook himself to Marshfield where, in 1637, he had obtained a grant of land. With this shift of abode Kenelm seems to have abandoned his trade for thereafter the records refer to him as a planter and sometimes interested in shipping. On September 13, 1672, while on a visit to Salem he died and was buried there.

Like Alden, with whom he may have worked for all we know, Winslow did not mark the product of his hand. So we do not know for a certainty just what furniture he made. There is a possibility that a sample of his skill may still survive. In Pilgrim Hall, Plymouth, is Governor Edward Winslow's wainscot chair. This the catalogue describes as " made in Cheapside, London in 1614," but careful students now question this statement. They are prone to feel that instead of being made of English oak the wood is New England light oak. If this be true, then

quite possibly it was made by no other person than the Governor's brother, Kenelm. To prove or disprove this beyond doubt is a task that should be undertaken by some qualified student of old furniture. It is a challenge not to be overlooked.

But while Alden was quietly going his way on his Duxbury farm and Winslow was concerning himself with crops and ships at Marshfield, things were happening in other parts of New England and happening with startling speed. Between 1629 and 1640 there was a mighty wave of migration from the western counties of old England to the Massachusetts Bay colony and other parts of New England. Well-to-do merchants, land-owners, artisans and professional men left the mother country in alarming numbers. In 1643, the United Colonies of New England made up of thirty-nine towns with a total population of 24,000 came into being. Soon their settlements reached from Greenwich, Conn., to Saco, Maine, and coastal New England was a region of boom towns with work and opportunity for everybody who would abide by the strict meeting-house-dominated oligarchy that was the law of the land.

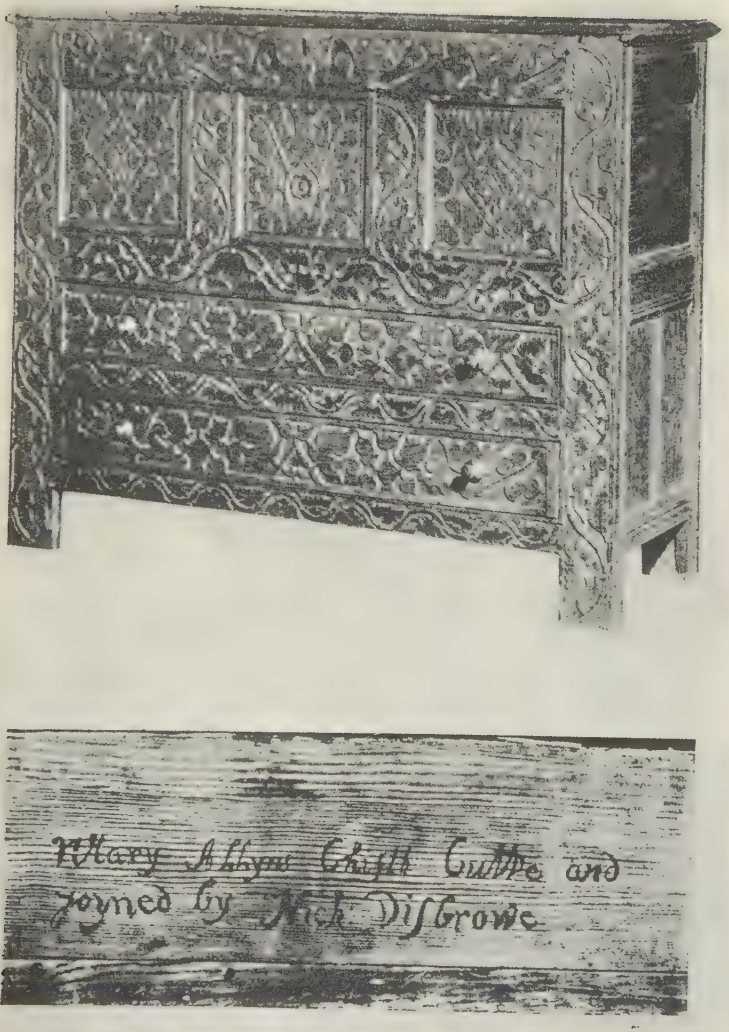
By 1650, the probate courts were handling estates as large as two thousand pounds sterling, relatively as much money as a half million dollars today. Skilled laborers were paid 16 shillings a day and prosperous joiners were coming over from England with their families and apprentices. Roger Mason arrived in Boston in 1635 with his wife and four children and in 1637, Samuel Dix, joyner, with his wife, two children and two apprentices, William Storey and Daniel Lindsey. This same year Edward Johnson of Canterbury, England, reached Boston with his wife, seven children and three servants. Quite evidently, Johnson was a cabinet maker of definite worldly wealth.

So it went. The records are full of the arrival of furniture makers of this sort. Sometimes, like Sergeant Stephen Jacques, the man who built the meeting house at Newburyport, these men are described as builders as well as makers of furniture. Unfortunately what pieces they made out of the oak, maple, pine, chestnut and ash that grew, so to speak, right beside their workshops, can only be determined by those examples that are now preserved in museums. These include tables, chairs, stools, benches, settles,

chests big and little, as well as writing boxes and Bible boxes.

Although bedsteads were in common use in New England from the start they were evidently very simple frames, for, in 1633, in Plymouth old bedsteads are valued as low as two shillings each, and none of these early examples seems to have survived. The earliest the writer knows of, is the folding bedstead dating from about 1700, now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. It is made of maple with two tall posts and a framework at the head to support the voluminous hangings that were considered part of every well furnished bed. A study of the antique shows one how the lower part swung up under the framework that supported the headboard draperies. In the Metropolitan there is also a cradle of American make, of oak with paneled sides not unlike the chests of the period. It dates from 1625 to 1675 and shows how simple were the tastes of the day. Except for the turnings of the corner posts and parallel lines of beading on the rails it is without ornamentation.

Simplicity again is the keynote of the oldest known American table. It dates from about 1650 and may also be seen in this same museum. The



(*Luke Vincent Lockwood from "Colonial Furniture in America," Scribners*)

PLATE V.—THE NICHOLAS DISBROWE CHEST AND INSCRIPTION.

(*Henry Ford*)

PLATE VI.—AN 18TH CENTURY ROOM IN THE WAYSIDE INN, SUDBURY, MASS.

top is a single plank of pine, twelve feet long and the three-part understructure connected by a long pinned-in single stretcher is of oak. It is not known just where in New England this table was made, but it can be considered as typical of the dining table in use for a long time throughout all of the American colonies. It is distinctly Elizabethan if not Gothic in line and its execution is simplicity itself.

Simplicity also ruled in the matter of the stools, benches and settles that took the place of chairs in the average New England house before the dawn of the eighteenth century. The stools were simple three or four-legged affairs of the general sort that had been used in England for several hundred years. The benches and settles were plain board structures, the latter with high backs and side pieces designed for warding off the chill drafts that were prevalent in those illy built and inadequately heated New England homes.

Of chairs there were two varieties. The "great" chair, a carved wainscot-constructed piece of furniture elaborately ornamented, was evidently only possible for a man of means. Such is the one known as the Brewster chair, a veri-

table archiepiscopal throne for the man who ruled the Plymouth colony for a generation. Then there were the simpler arm chairs made of turned uprights and spindle backs, with either a rush seat or one of woven splint. Later slats replaced the spindles of the backs and the slat back chair came into being. This typically American type continued to be made throughout New England until about the time of the Mexican War.

Chests, because of the manifold uses to which they were put, were the chief pieces of furniture in New England homes for the first 75 years. At first there were many that were brought over from the old country, but the frequency with which the earliest of the New England homes burned down seems to account for the rarity of English-made chests of this period. At first the this-country-produced chests were practically like those from the old homeland, only simpler. Then, suddenly in the hinterland of the Connecticut River Valley, chest making along lines that were distinctly original commenced. For many years it has been known that two distinct types of these chests were made. One was called the Connecticut and the other the Hadley. Care-

ful study of the carved ornamentation of these two examples led to the belief that they were the work of two different men, but who they were or where they lived remained unknown until but a half dozen years ago when Luke Vincent Lockwood of New York obtained possession of a two-drawer chest ornamented with an elaborately carved all-over design on the front. On the back of the lower drawer of the chest is written in seventeenth century handwriting:

"Mary Allyns Chistt Cutte and Joyned by Nich. Disbrowe."

This is the earliest piece of American furniture of proven origin. Mary Allyn, for whom this chest was made, was the daughter of Colonel John Allyn, secretary of the colony. She was born in Hartford in 1657 and died in 1724. In 1686 she married William Whiting.

Of Nicholas Disbrowe we can only find the following data: He was born at Walden, Essex county, England, in 1612-13 and was a property owner in Hartford, Conn., by 1639, where he lived at the north end of Burr street, now North Main street. He married Mary Bronson in 1640 and 20 years later obtained permission to build a 16-foot-square shop on the highway. For service

in the Pequot War on May 11, 1671, Disbrowe was granted 50 acres of land. Likewise he held the office of "chimney viewer" in 1647, 1655, 1663 and 1669. In 1665 Disbrowe was surveyor of highways, and, on March 6, 1672-3 at the age of 60, he was freed from military service.

In 1669 Disbrowe married Elizabeth, widow of Twaithe Strickland. He died in 1683 leaving a total property of £210, a sizable estate for Hartford in that year. At one time Disbrowe was charged with practicing witchcraft. This charge apparently arose from a disputed bill for a chest.

In Mr. Lockwood's opinion, Disbrowe was no ordinary carver and his design is distinguished by undulating bands of carved tulips flowing from stiles to rails without breaking. In writing about the Allyn chest in his book, "Colonial Furniture in America," he points out that Disbrowe's designs were carefully worked out to fit the individual piece and no two pieces are identical.

Of the Hadley chests Mr. Lockwood states that they were made by Captain John Allis of Hadley, Mass. Capt. Allis' mother was a niece of Nicholas Disbrowe, thus the maker of the Hadley chest was Disbrowe's grand-nephew. The Hadley chests were similar to the Dis-

(*Dr. George P. Coopernail*)

PLATE VII.—AN EARLY QUEEN ANNE DESK. MADE FOR DR. WELCH, ONE OF THE FIRST PHYSICIANS OF CONNECTICUT.

(*Dr. George P. Coopernail*)

PLATE VIII.—A DESK ON FRAME. MADE ABOUT 1710.

(*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*)

PLATE IX.—AN EARLY HIGHBOY OF CURLY MAPLE.

(*Dr. George P. Coopernail*)

PLATE X.—A HIGHBOY WITH CUPBOARD TOP. MADE AT BEDFORD, N. Y., ABOUT 1750.

browe style and quite possibly Allis saw the Mary Allyn chest as well as others made by his mother's uncle. Allis survived Disbrowe by only six years, and then his widow married Samuel Belden, and his son Ichabod not only married his step-father's daughter but went into partnership with him, forming the firm of Belden & Allis, builders, in 1702, of the meeting house at Hadley, Mass.

Thus the first American furniture of identified craftsmanship is more or less a family affair and was produced in a region which, but a few years previously, had been a trackless wilderness. At the same time that these two men were at work making and carving their chests, some other joiners unfortunately unknown were making another improvement. Under their hands the chest was becoming a chest of drawers. An example of this new chest of drawers of oak with carved ornamentation covering the entire front is in the Metropolitan Museum. It was made sometime between 1675 and 1700.

(*American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc.*)

PLATE XI.—JOHN HANCOCK'S INAUGURAL CHAIR. USED WHEN HE BECAME FIRST GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS. MADE ABOUT 1710.

(*Pennsylvania Museum, Memorial Hall, Philadelphia*)

PLATE XII.—A GROUP OF PHILADELPHIA CHIPPENDALE FURNITURE.

CHAPTER II

AMERICAN CHIPPENDALES

IN 1700, save for Georgia—Oglethorpe's interesting experiment in practical philanthropy—all of the original American Colonies were prosperous and going bodies politic. By hewing to the mark, the colonists had established themselves in land unknown less than a century before. Thanks to knick-knacks, rum, treaties, or massacre, the Indians had been disposed of quite handily. Likewise, the Netherlands and Sweden had surrendered New Amsterdam on the Hudson and New Sweden on the Delaware. So, from Maine almost to Florida there stretched a chain of English colonial possessions mostly converted from proprietary ventures to crown colonies presided over by individual royal governors of the stripe that had "stepped abroad to ease fortune of some of his father's debts."

Existence was no longer all log-cabin pioneering. In the important centers and in the lesser

towns, as well as on the older farms of the North and the plantations of the cavalier South, "modest affluence and ordered good living" was the rule. Racially the people were English, Scotch, Welsh, Irish, Hollanders and French Huguenots. A few Germans, Swiss, Swedes and Spanish and Portugese Jews added cosmopolitan variety. But all were rapidly being assimilated into independent colonials whose mental background was essentially English. Like the Britishers at home on their tight little island, world commerce, polite or somewhat piratically shady, was bringing these colonists material wealth that made possible a better standard of living for the average household. Their homes were larger and beginning to be painted outside. Their furniture was no longer either crudely home fashioned, or made of oak liberally carved in the Tudor tradition with native American variations.

Broadly speaking, 1700 marks the advent in American native cabinet making of the style of William and Mary, and also witnesses a sharp break with the Jacobean and Tudor traditions. This was followed in rapid succession by the Queen Anne and Early Georgian periods includ-

ing, if you will, the first fifteen or twenty years of the influence of Thomas Chippendale, and marks the flowering of American colonial furniture making. The spirit was that of eighteenth century England dominated, as it was, by the designs of Thomas Chippendale, but in execution it was distinctly American.

By now, furniture making was an established and going business. It was followed by native-born journeymen who obtained inspiration from such early books of design as those by G. Brunetti and James Gibbs. Then, too, occasionally furniture makers who had learned their trade in the Old Country came over and set up shop, being not at all disinclined to take on professional airs because of their more recent arrival from London or elsewhere.

With this combination, knowledge of the changes in furniture styles traveled almost as rapidly, considering the times and means of communication, as if there had been a business press devoted to the art of furniture design and the methods of making it. During that time, however, some very interesting things were happening in furniture making in America. First, the high-boy, although originally introduced from

England, became particularly an American piece. In England, by 1725, highboys were out of fashion, but not so in the colonies. Local workmen kept right on making them and refining the design with the result that it became primarily an American piece and was made in various styles as a standard and popular item of household furniture.

Much the same happened with Windsor chairs. By 1736 they had traveled to America and established themselves in the esteem of people high and low. From then on, Windsor chair making was frequently a special trade all by itself. So it continued for a hundred years, and American chair makers developed many variations and refinements which were totally unknown in the land of its origin.

Who the craftsmen of the first part of this furniture era were is lost information. All we know is that they were here. Museum and private collections have plenty of examples to show the industry of these unknown men. But then there comes a change and we have some interesting facts about a group of furniture makers. All were able craftsmen working enough in the Chippendale tradition to warrant their being called

American Chippendales. The list includes William Savery, Jonathan Gostelowe, Thomas Tufts and Benjamin Randolph, all of Philadelphia; John Goddard and his Townsend kinsfolk, Job, Christopher and John, all of Newport; Major Benjamin Frothingham of Charleston, Mass.; Col. Marinus Willett and Andrew Gautier of New York; Aaron Chapin of Hartford, Conn.; and Webb and Scott of Providence, R. I. Unfortunately no identifiable pieces of the work of Willett and Gautier have as yet been discovered, but they are worth considering because Gautier was the first to use illustrated newspaper advertising, while Willett's record as a soldier and patriot made him a colorful person.

William Savery, like John Goddard, was a Quaker and quite curiously it is these two members of the Society of Friends who produced some of the best examples of American furniture done in the Chippendale mode. Savery's very existence, however, was unknown until a few years ago, when a label was found on the under side of the lowboy in the collection of the Colonial Dames housed in the Van Cortlandt Manor House in New York City. This label reads, "All sorts of chairs and joiners work made and sold

by William Savery at the sign of the Chair, a little below the Market, in Second Street, Philadelphia."

This discovery made possible identification of a number of pieces in the Pennsylvania Museum and in possession of private owners in and around Philadelphia. Also, several chairs and other pieces with the same label have since come to light. Savery was a master craftsman and his furniture found ready purchasers among the wealthy Quakers and others who lived in Philadelphia, then leading the colonies in wealth and culture.

Biographical data about Savery are rather meager. The researches of Alfred C. Prime disclose that the Savery family came either directly from England or via the Barbadoes. When and where Savery was born is not known, but on April 19, 1746, he married Mary Peters in Philadelphia. He died in 1787, aged sixty-five, which means he was born in 1721 or 1722.

Records about Savery show that in 1754 he was a ward assessor. The certificate of this appointment signed by Benjamin Franklin is in the collection of the Pennsylvania Historical Society. That he prospered materially is borne out by a

tax bill of 1780 for £149, upon property valued at $46,000, American money,—a tidy sum for the poverty-stricken days of the close of the Revolution. Savery worked for a rich clientele and his pieces, largely done in a restrained Chippendale manner, make liberal use of the cabriole leg, the claw and ball foot, the fiddle back and the ornamentally turned stretcher. A considerable number of carved mahogany highboys and lowboys of Philadelphia make have been attributed to him, but it is now generally believed that Savery did not often employ ornate carving. He rather depended upon nicety of proportion and line for his artistic effects.

Jonathan Gostelowe was one of the goodly company of Philadelphia cabinet makers who were contemporaries and competitors of Savery, and since he marked at least one of his pieces we are able to identify his work and learn something of his time. A fine walnut serpentine chest of drawers now in the Pennsylvania Museum with label attached proves the type of work he produced, and study of records and family papers by Clarence W. Brazer supply details as to the man himself.

In this Philadelphia cabinet maker we have a

colorful character who occupied a prominent place during his life. He saw service in the Revolution as a major in the Corps of Artillery Artificers—Ordnance Corps we call it today. Afterward when he had returned to his trade Gostelowe played a leading part in the affairs of the Gentlemen Cabinet and Chair Makers, the Philadelphia trade association of the day. It was he who led them when they marched in the parade on Friday, July 4th, 1788, to celebrate the fact that the necessary ten states had ratified the new constitution. This was an impressive celebration carried through with fitting pomp and ceremony. About 5,000 men, civilian and soldiery, marched in the parade, and some 17,000 ate the collation served at Bush Hill following the patriotic oration of James Wilson.

In church matters Gostelowe was also active. For some years he was a vestryman of Christ Church, which still has the baptismal font and communion table that he presented to it.

The biographical facts about this outstanding cabinet maker are as follows. He was born at Passyunk in southern Philadelphia County, in 1744 or 1745. His father, George Gostelowe, was probably of Swedish birth, but his mother,

(*Van Cortlandt Manor*)

PLATE XIII.—A SAVERY LOWBOY. THE FIRST LABELED PIECE OF HIS TO BE FOUND. THE MARK OF IDENTIFICATION IS PASTED IN THE UPPER DRAWER.

(American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc.)

PLATE XIV.—A SAVERY ARMCHAIR WITH LABEL. FORMERLY IN THE HOWARD REIFSNYDER COLLECTION.

Lydia, is said to have come from Northamptonshire, England. By 1754, Jonathan's name is on the Philadelphia tax list, but without trade designation. On June 16, 1768, came his marriage to Mary, niece of Edward Duffield, the clockmaker, and executor of Benjamin Franklin's estate. Two years later Mary died, and for nineteen years Gostelowe remained a widower. It was during this time that he saw military service. At last with the Revolution over and his trade resumed, on April 19, 1789, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Robert Tower, the druggist, who had been first Chief Commissary of Military Stores and whose assistant Gostelowe had evidently been. From then on until his retirement in 1793 he followed his trade and had the distinction of possessing the most ornate business card of any of his fellow craftsmen. He died February 3, 1795.

As to the labeled walnut chest of drawers which made it possible to start tracing his activities, here are some details about its discovery which I do not think have been published before. Mr. Ginsburg, of the New York firm of antique furniture dealers of Ginsburg and Levy, went several years ago to a sale in an obscure

Brooklyn auction room. He arrived late and found that a walnut chest of drawers had already been sold to a dealer from Canada. Mr. Ginsburg happened to examine the piece and saw the Gostelowe label. Then the fun began. The Canadian dealer did not know of the label and cared less. He had bought a good piece and he intended to take it home with him. But at last the price Mr. Ginsburg offered was too attractive, and the first Gostelowe escaped the oblivion of Canada and in time passed into the possession of the Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia, the city where it originated. Where it had been and how it happened to turn up in a Brooklyn auction room is beside the point. It is now back home.

In Benjamin Randolph we have an American Chippendale who limited himself to chairs, but pieces of his work that have been located and identified are proof positive that here was a man of great artistic ability. His fame rests on the "six sample chairs" first discovered some twenty-five years ago by James Curran, the Philadelphia dealer. Rumors had been afloat for some time about these remarkable pieces and gradually they were gathered in by the ablest collectors.

Three of them finally became part of the famous collection of the late Howard Reifsnyder, and were sold last spring at the dispersal of the collection for prices that were truly kingly ransoms. In design and workmanship they outchippendale Chippendale himself. The carving of the cabriole legs and the ribbon tracery of the backs show plainly that wealthy Philadelphians were appreciative of the best.

In fact, connoisseurs of the Chippendale period of American cabinet making are now agreed that finer chairs were never produced in America. Randolph was a genius in his ability to work in the style of another and yet avoid the copyist's usual crudities and lapses.

Of Randolph himself the researches of Dr. Samuel W. Woodhouse Jr. have yielded these facts. He was born in Monmouth County, New Jersey. He was in business for himself in Philadelphia by February 18, 1762, when he married his first wife, Anna Bromwich, sole daughter and heir of William Bromwich, stay-maker of Sassafras Street. By 1768, Randolph was paying a tax of £42 and evidently he continued to prosper, for in 1786 his tax had mounted to £176.

That he was not adverse to turning his hand

to other things, if the temper of the time warranted, is indicated by an advertisement of his appearing in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* May 6th, 1777. It reads, "Holsters, pistols, carbines, swords for the Light Horse wanted immediately. Inquire of Benjamin Randolph in Chestnut Street." Question, did the artistic craftsman have the contract to supply the arms for this patriotic regiment of horse?

In time, the Declaration of Independence and kindred events having caused a marked depression in the business of making elaborate and costly furniture in the Chippendale mode, Randolph sold his Philadelphia property and retired to his place Speedwell Mills on Wadding River, near Burlington, New Jersey. This seems to have happened late in 1792. It is probable that his death took place not long afterward.

Working as he did in Philadelphia, he naturally came in contact with many of the great men of the Revolutionary era. Unfortunately he does not seem to have had any dealings with Washington, for none of the volumes of Washington correspondence includes letters to or from him. On the other hand, there is documentary proof that he did work for Thomas Jefferson.

(*Pennsylvania Museum, Memorial Hall, Philadelphia*)

PLATE XV.—A GOSTELOWE CHEST OF DRAWERS WITH LABEL.

(*American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc.*)

PLATE XVI.—TWO BENJAMIN RANDOLPH SAMPLE CHAIRS. FORMERLY IN THE HOWARD REIFSNYDER COLLECTION.

Randolph was, in fact, the maker of the table upon which was drafted the Declaration of Independence.

John Goddard of Newport, the other outstanding Quaker furniture master, likewise worked in a town famous for its wealth. Slave trading, privateering and whalefishing had their headquarters there and brought much money to support the town's first families in an austerely luxurious manner. Where Savery was known for his chairs and highboys, Goddard's fame rests on the fine secretary desks which are individual enough to be a type unto themselves. These were long known to collectors as Rhode Island desks until patient investigation disclosed that they were all made by one man—John Goddard. Carefully executed in mahogany, these desks had drawers with block fronts and shell carvings on the front of the writing leaf as well as the doors of the bookcase compartment above and the pigeonholes and drawers of the interior. Goddard was partial to broken pediment bonnet tops with flame finials. He also made tables large and small, and "common chairs" when his customers wanted them.

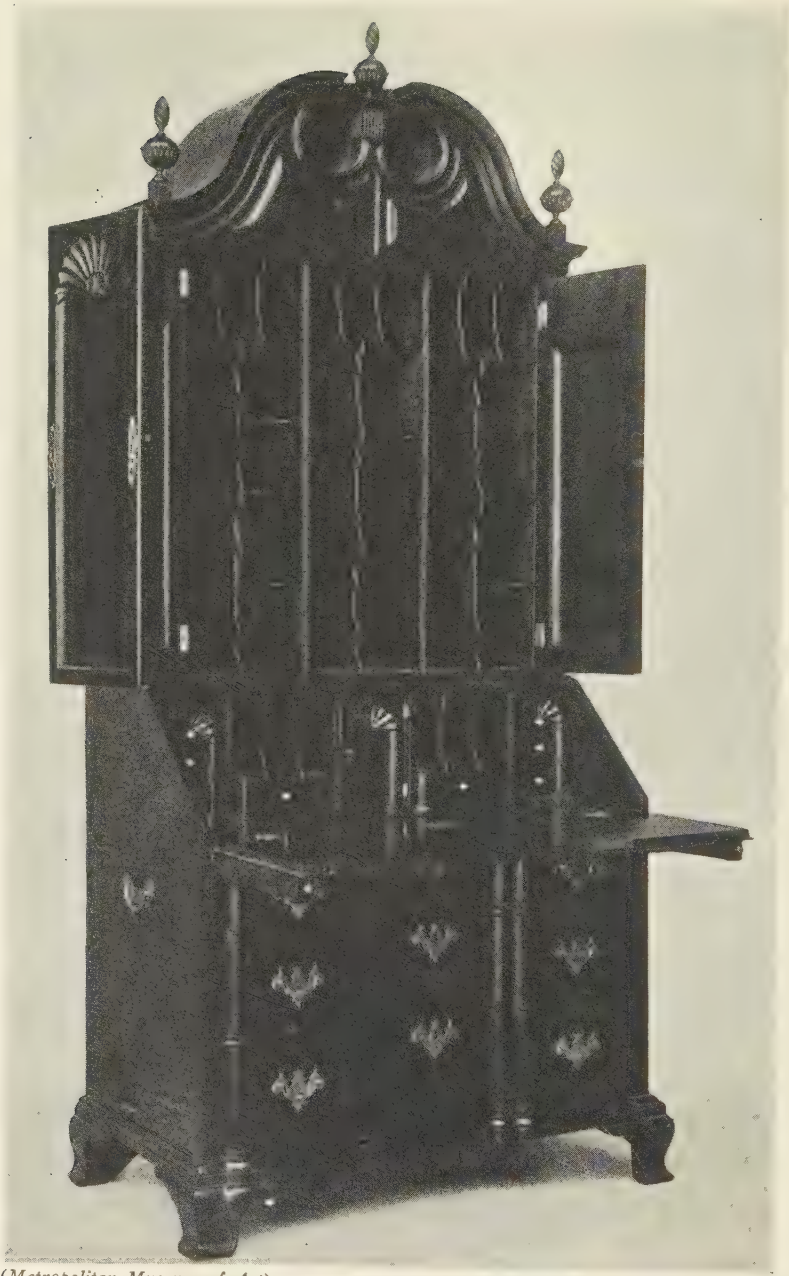
This New England disciple of Chippendale

was born in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, on January 20, 1723-24, the son of Daniel Goddard, a shipwright, and was the third generation of his family to live in New England. John, probably brought up in Newport, was on April 3, 1744, made a freeman of the colony. Two years later he married Hannah Townsend, whose father, Job, is believed to have been the master under whom Goddard served his apprenticeship. There is little information to enable us to follow Goddard's career as a craftsman. We know that, in 1764, with his father-in-law, he was elected to the office of "viewer of joiners lumber." Several letters written by Goddard have fortunately survived. These sometimes quite interestingly explain why he cannot make pieces of furniture as soon as his customers would have him. Possibly this is the explanation of why, when he died on July 16, 1785, his estate was advertised as insolvent.

A letter owned by the Rhode Island School of Design written by Goddard to one of the Brown family mentions one of the finest pieces he ever made. This is a tea table which was one of the features of the recent Flayderman sale in New York City. This letter reads as follows:

(*Dr. Samuel W. Woodhouse Jr.*)

PLATE XVII.—A RANDOLPH CHAIR WITH LABEL.



(*Metropolitan Museum of Art*)

PLATE XVIII.—A JOHN GODDARD DESK.

Newport ye 30th of ye 6th mo 1763

Friend Brown

I send herewith The Tea Table & common Chairs which thou spoke for with the Bill. the other Work is in good forwardness hope to compleat in a short time. I Recd. a few lines from Jabez Bowen whom I suppose this furniture is for, Requesting me to make a pre.Case of Drawers. please to inform him I shall gladly serve him if he can wate till sometime in the fall which will be as soon as I can finnish them as I have but little help. if he inclines to wate for me I would know whither he means to have them different from what is common, as there is a sort which is called Chest on Chest of Drawers & Sweld front which are Costly as well as ornimental. thou'l Please to let me know friend Bowens minde that I may act accordingly. till then am they friend

Jno.Goddard

As we have just said, Goddard married into the Townsend family, which recent investigation indicates was the leading cabinet making group of Newport. The first of the Townsends to follow the trade were the brothers Job and Christopher. Job was born in 1699 and died in 1765. A set of six Queen Anne walnut chairs with fiddle backs and Dutch-footed cabriole front legs, made by him about 1730, have been located and identified. Of Christopher's furniture we as

yet know nothing. Both had large families and because of similarity of Christian names it is hard to trace just who was whose son. We do know that John Goddard married Job's daughter Hannah. Also there is in existence a secretary which carries on the central door of the cabinet section the inscription, "Made by Job Townsend in Newport."

As to brother Christopher, one of his sons was no less a person than John Townsend, the man who could make block fronted chests of drawers and secretars in every whit as fine Chippendale style as his kinsman, John Goddard. A number of labeled Townsend pieces have been located and, besides proving his skill and artistic ability, they show that he sometimes worked in the Hepplewhite manner.

In the third generation the Goddard-Townsend dynasty was represented in cabinet making by Thomas Goddard, 1765-1858. His span of life was nearly the same as that of Duncan Phyfe. He is of interest for his memorandum inscriptions on pieces made by his father and repaired by him. One of these reads, "Made by John Goddard, 1761 and repaired by Thomas Goddard, his son, 1813. Health Officer of the

Town of Newport Appointed by the Honr. Town Council Members Nicholas Taylor Esq. & my son T. Topham." Of his other activities we know that he was a member of the Society of Friends, active enough in the local fire company to become its captain, and a staunch Federalist who cast his first presidential vote for George Washington.

Major Benjamin Frothingham is a new addition to the identified craftsmen of the colonial era. Thanks to Dexter E. Spalding, a desk from Frothingham's shop in Charlestown has been discovered and carefully described. In structure, this piece shows originality in the application of the reverse serpentine curve of the drawer fronts and a rather unique ogival bracket foot. The interior of the desk is likewise ornamented by a carefully executed shell carving upon the front of the central small drawers.

Benjamin Frothingham was born in Boston, April 6, 1734. His father, Benjamin, was, likewise a joiner and cabinet maker with a shop not far from the Milk street habitat of the parents of Benjamin Franklin. By 1756 the younger man had moved to Charlestown and enlisted in Richard Gridley's artillery company. Evidently

he liked being in uniform on "training days," for by 1775 he held a commission as first lieutenant in Capt. Joseph Chadwick's company of Col. Richard Gridley's artillery regiment. From 1777 to 1780 Frothingham's name appears on the payroll of the Continental Army. He was wounded at Bethlehem, and various military records show his continuous service until 1782. Unfortunately the record of his promotion to the rank of major has not been found, nor have any documents proving his direct military relationship with George Washington. But Washington evidently knew him well, for it is recorded that when, on October 29, 1789, Washington was in Charlestown, the only call he made was on "Major Benjamin Frothingham, a cabinet maker whom he had known in the army, and who was a member of the Cincinnati."

F. F. Hunnewell's "History of Charlestown" corroborates all this in the following passage: "Major Benjamin Frothingham lived on the lot next north of the engine house opposite Walker street, and who lost a dwelling, barn and shop (destruction of Charleston by the British, in 1775). At his house, built of course after the war, General Washington made the only private call

(*American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc.*)

PLATE XIX.—ONE OF SIX QUEEN ANNE CHAIRS BY JOB TOWNSEND.

(*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*)

PLATE XX.—A CHEST OF DRAWERS BY JOHN TOWNSEND, DATED NOVEMBER 20TH, 1792.

—the only call—that he ever made in Charlestown. The Frothinghams held lands in the neighborhood from its settlement, owning nearly across the peninsula."

Of Andrew Gautier, one of the first American furniture makers to use illustrated newspaper advertising, little is known. He was born in New York in 1720 and died in 1784. His grandfather, Jacques, was a French Huguenot who came to New York with a number of his co-religionists at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Andrew Gautier, as his advertisement in the New York *Gazette*, of April 18, 1765, shows, specialized in the making of Windsor chairs, but either he did not brand his work with a hot iron as others did, or none has survived.

If a piece of furniture labeled Marinus Willett could be discovered, it undoubtedly would bring an interesting price. For this prerevolutionary New York cabinet maker was a patriot of no mean order. Quite possibly his action in defending Fort Stanwix, which stood where Rome, N. Y., now is, and thereby preventing St. Leger from joining Burgoyne, changed the whole course of the Revolution. Had

St. Leger re-enforced "Gentleman Johnny," the battle of Saratoga would not have been the crucial victory for the Continental Army. Without this news Franklin never could have enlisted the open and active support of Louis XVI, king of France.

Earlier in the Revolution Col. Willett also played an important and picturesque part. With Paul Revere, Boston's patriot silversmith, William Dawes, Jr.—ancestor of Ambassador Dawes—and a man named Lamb, Willett took part in the dramatic dispatch carrying episodes of the opening days of the Revolution. Even then military service was no novelty to him. He had seen service during the French and Indian War in the expedition under Lord Amherst that culminated in driving the French out of Fort Ticonderoga.

Col. Marinus Willett was born in the farming village of Jamaica, now part of the city of New York, in 1740, and died at his Broome street home in New York in 1830. Evidently neither cabinet making nor warfare sapped his vitality. His last public appearance as a distinguished citizen was at a mass meeting to raise funds for the cause of the independence of Greece. At this

the venerable man rose and pledged 2000 acres of wild land still due him as his adjusted compensation for his revolutionary service to the cause of Greek liberty. The elaborate public funeral that was accorded him, including fellow members of the Order of the Cincinnati, riding in open carriages, is proof of the high position Willett held.

His son in 1831 published a minute account of his father's military career, not forgetting the daring episode when, on July 6, 1775, at the corner of Broad and Beaver streets, New York, Col. Willett led the Sons of Liberty when they seized the British wagon trains starting for the relief of British troops quartered in Boston.

Furniture making evidently did not interest the younger Willett. He makes no mention of his father's furniture making days. Our only information about this is the advertisements which appeared in the New York daily papers of 1773 and '74. One of these discovered by Charles O. Cornellius, associate curator, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, reads, "Marinus Willett removed his Vendue store to the house lately occupied by Weldron & Cornell next door to Abram Lott's Esq. Tres. Every article in the

. . . 'Cabinet' or 'Chairway' may be had on the shortest notice and executed in the best manner by Willett and Peasey, at the said Vendue store, at the sign of the Clothes press near the new Oswego market, at the upper end of Maiden Lane, who will take the dry goods in pay. N. B. There is on hand at either of the above places an assortment of choice mahogany furniture."

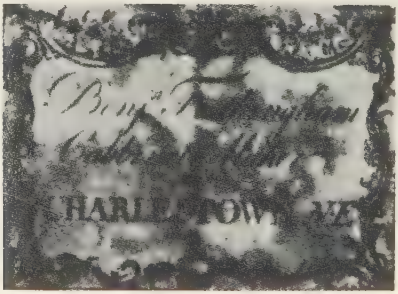
Aaron Chapin, first of East Windsor, Conn. and after 1783 of Hartford, was one of the foremost Connecticut Valley workers in the Chippendale manner. His secretars and highboys are fine examples of this school, while the mass and proportion of his pieces leave no doubt of his ability as a designer and workman.

Webb and Scott of Providence is another firm of cabinet makers whose work can best be characterized as Chippendale-Hepplewhite transition. A labeled secretary of theirs made of cherry shows an interesting combination of Chippendale outline and Hepplewhite inlay ornamentation. Their shop was on Benefit Street and they worked during the last two decades of the 18th century.

John Elliot was the outstanding Philadelphia dealer in mirrors during the two decades prior

(*Antiques*)

PLATE XXI.—THE LAST OF THE TOWNSEND-GODDARD DYNASTY.
THOMAS GODDARD, 1765-1858.

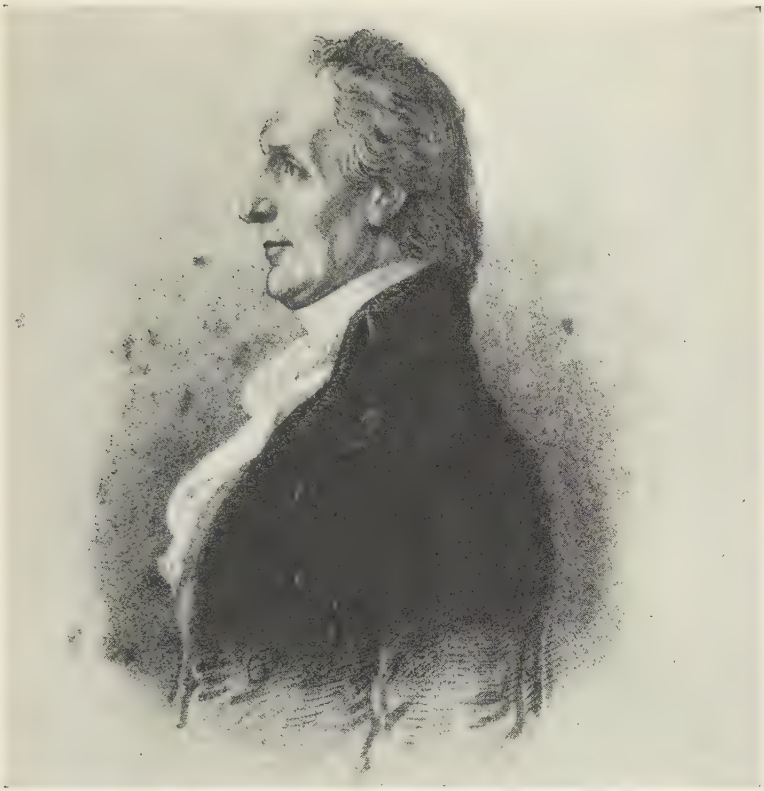


(*American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc.*)

PLATE XXII.—A HEPPLEWHITE SIDEBOARD WITH FROTHINGHAM LABEL.

to the Revolution. His "Looking-glass Store" was on Walnut Street and both his labeled pieces and newspaper advertising indicate that he was more a dealer in mirrors imported from England than a craftsman. He was evidently a keen merchant with an eye not only for the trade of the English-speaking Philadelphians but also glad to get the patronage of the Palatinate Germans for at least his labels were bi-lingual. Little or no biographical data have yet been found concerning Benjamin Burnham who is believed to have worked in Philadelphia prior to 1775. A marked desk by him dated 1769 is in the Metropolitan Museum and its design and workmanship show that he can rightly be included in the list of American Chippendales.

Although most of the cabinet makers of the American Chippendale school lived to see Independence won and the United States firmly established as a sovereign entity, their style of furniture making may be said to end with Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown. After this came a new political and social structure and with it a new era of furniture, the Early Republican.



Mahogany Furniture.

THREE elegant deſks and book caſes,
1 cheſt upon cheſt of drawers,
1 Lady's dreſſing cheſt and book caſe,
3 Deſks, and one pair card tables,
2 Sets of chairs,
3 Dining tables, 5 breakfaſt tables,
1 Clock caſe, furniſhed with a good plain eight day clock. Sundry ſtands, &c.

The above articles are well made, and moſt of them of wood of the firſt quality, and will be ſold as low as any furniture (of equal goodneſs) in the city, by

WILLETT and PEARSEY,

Cabinet and chair-makers, at the ſign of the clothes preſs, nearly oppoſite the Oſwego-Market, at the upper end of Maiden-Lane, where cabinet and chair work of every kind is punctually performed with the greateſt neatneſs and care.

PLATE XXIII.—COL. MARINUS WILLETT AND ONE OF HIS NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS.

(American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc.)

PLATE XXIV.—A TRANSITION SECRETARY. STRUCTURALLY IT IS CHIPPENDALE. THE ORNAMENTATION IS HEPPLEWHITE. ITS LABEL READS: "WEBB & SCOTT, CABINET & CHAIR MAKERS, BENEFIT-STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND."

CHAPTER III

DUNCAN PHYFE, THE GREAT

FURNITURE mirrors the social, political, literary and the economic trends of its time. It is for, and a part of, its generation. Therefore, it is passing strange that the outstanding furniture maker of the early Republican days of the United States should have been a man of Highland Scotch birth and boyhood.

Nevertheless, Duncan Phyfe is the cabinet craftsman pre-eminent of the first three decades of our federal republic. Hardly had the Constitution of the United States been ratified by the nine states necessary to make it binding on all thirteen sovereign political entities, than Phyfe began work as a craftsman and designer. By and large he used English forms to which he applied a touch of French ornamentation. This was very much in tune with the day and age. Even the Constitution itself was structurally English, not to say Anglo-Saxon, while the trim-

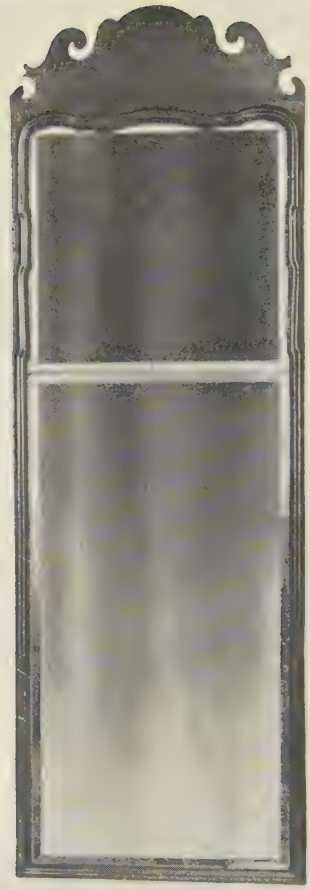
mings, added to facilitate acceptance, were thoughts or phrases bodily borrowed from the Gallic political philosophers.

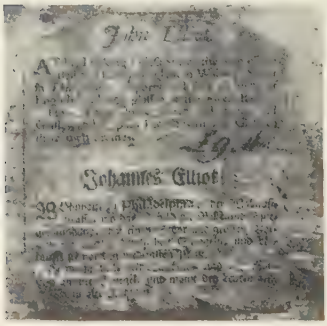
In Phyfe's furniture we catch a glimpse of the aristocratic and reasonably prosperous days that lasted from the inauguration of Washington to the Jacksonian rise to power, political and economic, of the plain people of the seaboard and the Mississippi basin. Yet with all this, prosperous Scotch Duncan was a man of the people. Would he stop work, take off his beaver headpiece or leave off smoking a stubby pipe, just because a visiting British aristocrat, Lord John Hay, came to consult with him about cabinet woods? Not Duncan Phyfe. His caller received a civil answer and correct information, but no gesture of social deference. Phyfe practiced Robert Burns' precept, "A man's a man for a' that."

Although he made furniture for aristocrats, they were those of a Republic where birth did not give the right to expect hat doffing or knee flexing. He was a plain man of strict habits. In fact, he tended so closely to business that, regardless of 62 years' residence in New York City, it is only with the most careful search of

(*Metropolitan Museum of Art*)

PLATE XXV.—A MAHOGANY DESK BY BENJAMIN BURNHAM, DATED 1769. IT IS BELIEVED, HE WORKED IN PHILADELPHIA.





(*American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc.*)

PLATE XXVI. — A QUEEN ANNE MIRROR BY JOHN ELLIOT PHILADELPHIA WITH

contemporary records that any trace of him can be found. He may have been trained in the "joyner's" trade, but evidently did not hold with taking part in public, social or religious enterprises. He is reputed to have been a staunch Presbyterian, but records of the First Presbyterian and the Brick Presbyterian churches do not show that he was ever a member of either, although his wife and others of his family were. Likewise, Phyfe never joined the St. Andrew's society, an organization of substantial men of Scottish birth or descent, which dined ponderously and annually at the City hotel. Several of his sons and nephews, however, were not so backward. When, in 1825, New York turned herself inside out to celebrate the completion of the Erie Canal, with a stupendous civic parade organized by trades and professions, Phyfe, the city's leading cabinet maker, was not even one of the marshals of the first section of the Third Division. In this, under banners of the Fancy and Windsor Chairmakers' Employers' and Journeymen's societies, "about two hundred of the trade appeared in the procession." Just one little note in Colden's Memorial of this great event mentions Phyfe. He is credited with having made the

cedar boxes for the medals struck off for this occasion and the casket for the bottles of Lake Erie water sent to Lafayette. Evidently his motto was, "Take the cash and let the credit go."

Further than this, save for mention in small type in the city directories, Phyfe's name is not to be found in any contemporary record. Auctioneer Hone, who rose to be Mayor Philip Hone and kept a most complete and gossipy diary, never mentions Phyfe. Neither do any of the travelers who visited New York and then wrote flattering or critical books on its wonders or its boorishnesses. Nor do hours of reading the New York papers of that day disclose a single advertisement bearing the name Duncan Phyfe. He was a genius in hiding himself from view and leaving the fashionable gentry, male and female alike, to spread his name and fame abroad by word of mouth. In fact, all record of him might have been lost and we today might quite possibly be referring to the nameless master of New York, except that the distinct character of his design and work led another cabinet maker to identify some of the best Phyfe pieces and gather every possible bit of data about the man himself. This labor of love, Ernest Hagen, who, were he still

alive, would be past the hundred year mark, commenced nearly fifty years ago, and the notebook in which he and his son, Ernest F. Hagen, set down all their Phyfe gleanings, forms the basis of the books and articles since written. Also, their judgment that this or that piece was of Phyfe make is the foundation upon which museum curators and discerning collectors base their opinions of Phyfe design and execution.

The Phyfe family came from Loch Fannich in the northern highlands of Scotland. Here, in 1768, Duncan was born. They were members of the Mackenzie clan and probably shepherds tending their flocks on the bleak hillsides. The country around Loch Fannich, romantic as the name may sound, was never the scene of exploits of the picturesque Scottish Chiefs. Instead the people for generations led so uneventful and undramatic a life that history and romance have practically ignored that region.

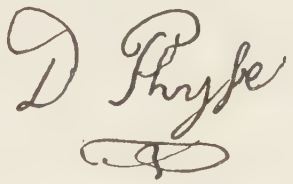
From here, in 1783, Gabel Phyfe, his wife and family of six or eight children, departed for the New World. They seem to have been headed direct for Albany. Possibly some of their kin, serving in a Highland regiment and taken prisoner at the battle of Saratoga, may have sent

home glowing accounts of the thriving town, but recently Fort Orange. During the long voyage, two of the children including a younger sister, Eliza, died. The family reached New York either late in 1783 or early in 1784—just about the time when Washington, with a simple and moving ceremony, bade farewell to his officers and left for his Mount Vernon home and, he thought, private life.

The Phyfes went at once to Albany. Here Duncan, the second son, was apprenticed either to some unknown cabinet maker or possibly to a coach builder—coach making being an early and notable industry in Albany and Scots the leaders of the trade.

Just when Duncan completed his apprenticeship and returned to New York is unknown. The first city directory of 1786 does not mention him, but the second of 1792 lists both Duncan and his brother John. Also this entry proves the family tradition that the name was originally spelled F-i-f-e. Brother John was a carman living on Dey street, and Duncan is listed as "joiner, 2 Broad street." By the time the third directory was compiled Duncan Phyfe's days of discouragement and hard times are past. He is not any

longer thinking of giving up and going back to Albany. Instead, he is the protégé of Mrs. Langdon, daughter of John Jacob Astor, the fur prince of New York. Now he is listed as "P-h-y-f-e, Duncan, cabinet-maker, 3 Broad street."



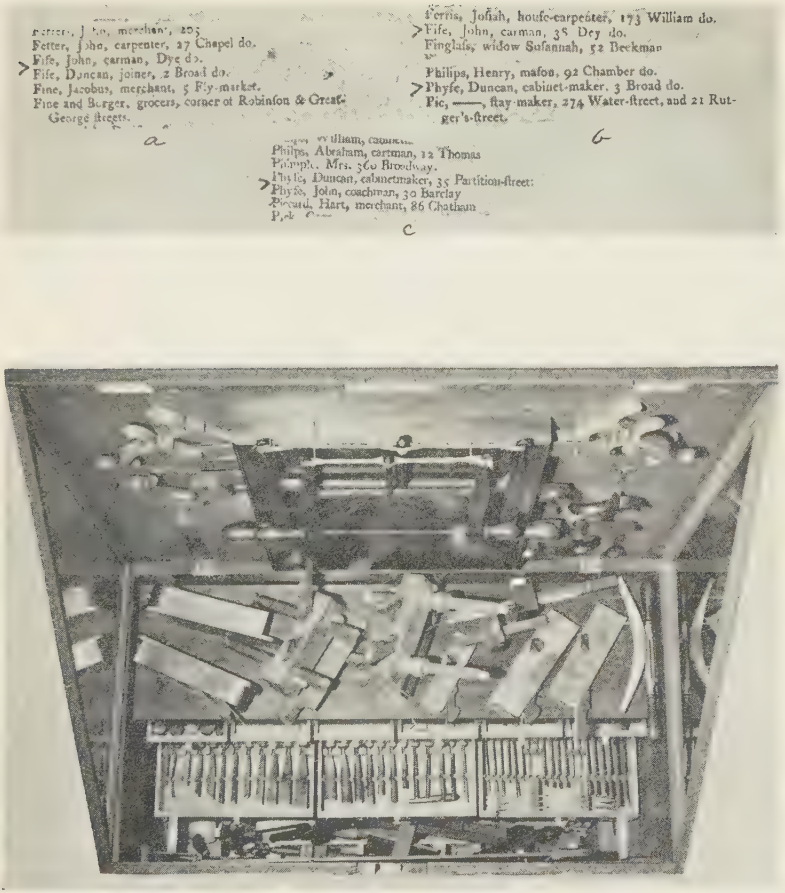
DUNCAN PHYFE'S SIGNATURE WRITTEN IN AN OLD BOOK NOW OWNED BY PHYFE'S GREAT-GRANDSON F. PERCY VAIL.

Family tradition has it that a schoolmaster suggested this change in spelling as a means of distinguishing the family from any other Fifes that might come over from Scotland. Possibly this is so, but since brother John, the carman, clung to the old spelling of their name until 1800 when he is listed as John Phyfe, coachman, we suspect that Duncan saw in this distinctive spelling a business advantage not to be overlooked by the man who was fast becoming the favored cabinet maker and furniture designer of New York. From 1800 on, all the Phyfes used the new spelling until 1828 when Martha, widow of

William Phyfe, half reverted to the old style and spelled it F-y-f-e.

A study of the manuscript book of the enumerator who took the census of 1790 for Albany shows additional data about the Phyfe name and family affairs. This volume, which had its edges burned away when the British fired the Capitol in 1814, was made available to me through the courtesy of Dr. R. H. McFall of the Bureau of the Census. Careful study of this Phyfe entry, taking into consideration the evident erasures and corrections, indicate that Duncan's father died at about this time, possibly a few days after the enumerator had paid his official visit. It is evident that the name Isabel was written over another name hastily erased. In the column, "Free white males of 16 years and upward including heads of families," a number has evidently been erased. The conclusion that the enumerator altered his books to conform to a recent death is quite obvious and I think perfectly tenable. This entry also shows that only two boys under sixteen were still at home, and none of the daughters. Evidently the large Phyfe family had already scattered.

Duncan Phyfe continued his workshop on


Fetter, John, merchant, 205
Fetter, John, carpenter, 27 Chapel do.
Fife, John, carman, Dye do.
Fife, Duncan, joiner, 2 Broad do.
Fine, Jacobus, merchant, 5 Fly-market.
Fine and Berger, grocers, corner of Robinson & Great-George streets.
a
Ferris, Josiah, house-carpenter, 173 William do.
Fife, John, carman, 38 Dey do.
Finglass, widow Susannah, 52 Beekman
Philips, Henry, mason, 92 Chamber do.
Phyfe, Duncan, cabinet-maker, 3 Broad do.
Pic, ——, stay-maker, 274 Water-street, and 21 Rutger's-street.
b
Philips, Abraham, cartman, 12 Thomas
Phyfe, Duncan, cabinetmaker, 35 Partition-street:
Phyfe, John, coachman, 30 Barclay
c

(*Henry P. and Churchill S. Phyfe*)

PLATE XXVII.—STEPS IN THE CHANGE FROM F-I-F-E TO P-H-Y-F-E. a. 1792; b. 1794; and c. 1800. (Upper) PHYFE'S OWN TOOL CHEST. (Lower)

(*Metropolitan Museum of Art*)

PLATE XXVIII.—THE PHYFE SHOPS. THEY STOOD ON FULTON STREET, NEW YORK CITY, WHERE THE HUDSON TERMINAL NOW IS. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT THEY ARE, WORKSHOP, SHOWROOM AND WAREHOUSE. PHYFE LIVED ACROSS THE STREET IN A HOUSE SIMILAR TO THE WAREHOUSE.

Broad street, then the furniture street of the city, until 1806, when he moved his shop and home to adjoining buildings at 34 and 35 Partition street. For that day, this was equivalent to having a retail shop today on Park avenue just off Fifty-seventh street. St. Paul's Chapel, diagonally opposite, was the Episcopal church of the day, and Broadway, the fashionable promenade. On this street he stayed the rest of his life. In 1811 he bought number 33 giving him three buildings on the same side of the street. One was his home, another his show room, and the third his workshop. In 1817 Partition street and the corresponding street, east of Broadway, were renamed for Robert Fulton, the recently deceased inventor of the steamboat. By this time Phyfe had purchased a house across the street, where he lived until his death in 1854. These neatly proportioned Georgian buildings, 168, 170 and 172 Fulton street, have long since disappeared. Today the Hudson Terminal stands in their place, and the firehouse opposite marks the site of the Phyfe homestead. Incidentally, Phyfe's descendants only sold these real estate holdings when condemnation proceedings for public improvements made such sales imperative. The last

Phyfe holding on Fulton street, originally Duncan's garden, passed out of Phyfe ownership only a few years ago, when the land and building were acquired by the City for new subway construction.

Duncan Phyfe's rise to fame and fortune was almost meteoric. Arriving in New York about 1790, he was in a very few years the leading furniture designer and cabinet maker there, and his reputation had spread to Philadelphia, Albany, and the important towns of New Jersey and the Hudson River valley. In 1797 a New Yorker of wealth and social position, on marrying, had Phyfe make all the furniture for his new home. Knickerbocker New York was, during these years and particularly with the advent of the nineteenth century, becoming a city of notable commercial enterprise. There were many families to whom this brought increasing wealth. They built themselves fine homes which in turn gave their standard of living an upward sweep. This "keeping up with the Jones" provided Phyfe with an excellent market right at his very front door for furniture of a design that was different. He did not have to make his product to sell at a price, and therefore could produce pieces

in which his creative talent and regard for the very best workmanship were combined.

There is only one Duncan Phyfe bill known to be in existence. This was found by Ernest Hagen and presented by him to T. R. Haines Halsey, the owner of an outstanding collection of Phyfe furniture. This bill, made out to Charles N. Bancker, Philadelphia, is worth quoting because it shows the high prices Phyfe charged for his furniture.

1816

Jany 4 Mr. Bancker
to D. Phyfe dr.

To 12 Mahogany chairs @ $22	$264.00
Sofa	122.00
Piere table	265.00
Pair card tables	130.00
Packing	19.00
	$800.00
Discount 3 prct for cash	24.00
	$776.00

Also, another fragment preserved with this is interesting because the two rough pencil sketches of chairs illustrate the odd fact that Phyfe was

a wretched draftsman. These sketches of his typical delicately executed lyre-back chairs were bunglingly done and lacking in perspective. With cabinet tools he was a master of line, but not so with paper and pencil.

Duncan Phyfe is particularly interesting as an artist-craftsman when one realizes that his was no history of struggle until middle life for acceptance and pecuniary recognition. Instead, before he was thirty, he was well established, and the next three decades are his period of finest work. After that, due to a changing mode, he made heavier and less artistic furniture but still his work is marked by a fineness which his latter-day contemporaries totally lacked. Decadent Phyfe may be scorned by some, but critical study of his pieces of the "canal boat" days discloses that, while others worked in a gross manner, he was still an adherent of fine proportions and delicate work.

In the years of his best work he was a follower of Hepplewhite and Sheraton, the two English masters who succeeded Chippendale. To design, based on that of these Englishmen, he added a touch of ornamentation derived from French cabinet makers of the Directory and Consulate

(*Ernest F. Hagen*)

PLATE XXIX.- -A PHYFE SOFA WITH CANE SEAT AND PANELS.

[Geo. Charles & Sons (?)]

PLATE XXX.—A PHYFE SOFA IN THE EARLY EMPIRE STYLE. FEET ARE PAINTED BLACK AND WINGED ORNAMENTATION GILDED.

epochs. This Hepplewhite - Sheraton - with - French-variations periods of his designing lasted from about 1795 to 1820, and was followed in turn by the American Empire phase of his work which terminated in 1830. After that were the days of his decadency.

The work of Duncan Phyfe's earliest and best days is characterized by the use of reeding, acanthus leaf carving and ornamental brass hardware. It is during this time that he made his delicately executed, lyre-backed chairs, finely proportioned and handsomely carved sofas, and tripod-based tables. Also he was then making other tables with reeded legs that distinctly show Sheraton's influence. The transition to his American Empire days is gradual, and in many of his pieces made in this latter mode he utilized details brought over from his earlier style. The bases of his tables became less restrained in their carving and of slightly heavier proportions although he still continued to make skilful use of leaf carving. An excellent example of this is the three-part banquet table now in the Metropolitan Museum. In this and other of his Empire pieces he made liberal use of special bands and panels of grained mahogany veneering to em-

ploy ornamental brasses, particularly rosettes and claw-foot tips for table legs. In fact, his brother Lochlin who worked with him all his life made a number of trips to England to select the brasses for the Phyfe workshops.

During these years he was employing as many as a hundred workmen and is credited with having his own lumber yard nearby. For his shops he imported the finest Santo Domingo and Cuban mahogany. West Indian exporters referred to their best timbers as "Duncan Phyfe logs" and he is said to have paid as high as $1000 a piece for some of them. The veneering which he used was cut under his supervision and applied with Peter Cooper's best glue.

Even in his later years when he made his heavier pieces, which he is reported to have scorned, he worked only with the best mahoganies and lightened the artistic gloom by the skilful employment of decorative veneering. This is the time when the firm became, first in 1837, Duncan Phyfe & Sons, and then, in 1840, Duncan Phyfe & Son. In 1846 the business was discontinued and the stock of furniture on hand disposed of at auction. From then until his death he lived quietly in his home across the street, but

did not entirely forsake his craft. In the backyard he had his own little shop where he spent much of his time at the bench making gifts for members of the family. These presentation pieces included sewing tables, boxes, cradles and doll's chests of drawers.

Evidently until the last he got great satisfaction from work, and this product of his old age, while done in his "canal boat" manner, is never the fumbling tinkering of an old man. The Phyfe family still has a number of these bits and their workmanship does not betray the hand of a man in his eighties.

On August 16, 1854, Duncan Phyfe was no more. The only record of his death is to be found in the New York *Times* of the 19th: "In this city on Wednesday Duncan Phyfe in the 86th year of his age." As quietly as he had lived, he died and was buried in the churchyard of the First Presbyterian church on Beekman street. A year later his body was removed to Greenwood cemetery in Brooklyn. Here it was placed in the brownstone-faced family vault that is not even marked with the Phyfe name.

This master designer and craftsman, who was a small, stocky, retiring man of many idiosyn-

crasies, including a steadfast refusal to sit for even a daguerreotype, had, however, keen business sense and an acquisitive faculty of a high order. All this is brought out by study of the papers connected with his estate which, although on record in New York City, have never before been commented upon.

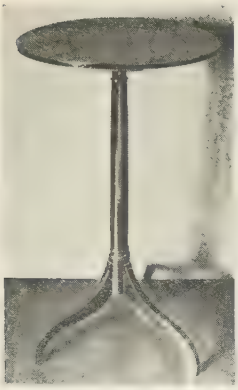
Altogether, he died worth nearly half a million. His will deserves quoting because it shows he was more than generous to his children, grandchildren and less affluent relatives. It reads:

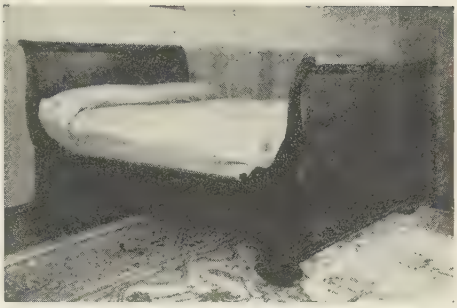
I, Duncan Phyfe of the City of New York, late Cabinet-maker, being of sound and disposing mind memory and understanding, do make publish and declare this to be my last Will and Testament. First—I order and direct that all my just debts and funeral expenses be paid by my Executors hereinafter named, as soon as conveniently may be after my decease—Second—I give devise and bequeath unto my two daughters Mary, widow of Sidney B. Whittock, and Eliza, wife of William Vail, all my silverware, china and glassware, curtains both bed and window, all beds, bed linen and bedding of every kind, table linen, set of knives and forks and box containing them which box was made by me to be divided equally between my said daughters—Third—I give devise and bequeath to my brother, Lochlin Phyfe, the yearly sum of four hundred and twenty dollars to be paid to him by my Executors in half yearly

payments for and during the term of his natural life and that my Executors retain in their hands out of my personal estate so much as will be sufficient to produce said annual sum and after the death of the said Lochlin Phyfe I order and direct that the said sum so retained by my said Executors for him shall sink into and form part of my residuary personal estate and go and be applied in the same manner as I shall hereafter direct as to my said residuary personal estate—Fourth—I give devise and bequeath unto Duncan Phyfe, William Phyfe and Mary Jane Wintringham wife of David Wintringham, children of my deceased son Michael, each the sum of fourteen thousand dollars and do direct that the same be paid to them as soon as practicably may be after my decease. Fifth—I give devise and bequeath all the rest residue and remainder of my Estate, Real and Personal, equally to and amongst my Children, Mary, widow of Sidney B. Whittock, Eliza, wife of William Vail, William Phyfe, James D. Phyfe and Edward D. Phyfe to have and to hold the same to them my said children their heirs and assigns forever. Lastly I make, nominate, constitute and appoint my said sons, William Phyfe, James D. Phyfe and my son-in-law William Vail Executors of this my last Will and Testament hereby revoking all former and other Wills by me at any time heretofore made. In witness whereof I have hereto subscribed my name and affixed my seal this twenty fourth day of January, one thousand eight hundred and fifty four.

D. PHYFE

In the appraisal of his personal property, including the contents of his home, are a number of interesting items. For instance: "Mahogany sideboard and cellaret, $20.00," "8 mahogany French chairs, $12.00," "one set mahogany extension tables, $10.00," "one mahogany candlestand, $1.00," "one mahogany high post bedstead, 2.00," "one field bedstead and tester, $1.00." This had been relegated to a room in the garret where also was found, "one lot, cabinetmaker's books and drawings, $.50." Could these books and drawings be found today, the museums of the country would compete keenly to obtain them. In the shop in the yard were found "4 unfinished footbenches, $.50," "1 unfinished workbox, $.10," "1 old maple writing desk, $.50" as well as "1 lot of mahogany veneers sold to Mr. Buckley, $100.00," and "1 chest of tools, $25.00." His gold watch, chain and seal were valued at $75.00, and $30.00 was given as the worth of "articles of clothing comprising the late personal wardrobe of the testator." In addition to $4739.70 deposited in the North River Bank the appraisers of the estate list $473.00 as "cash on hand found in a book." Among his securities were $24,820.00 worth of government





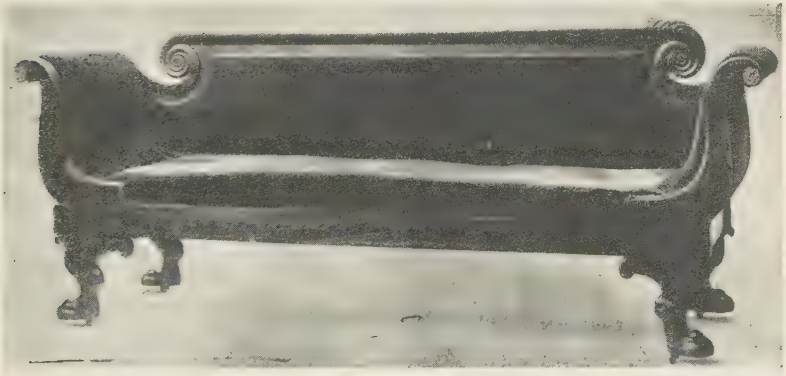


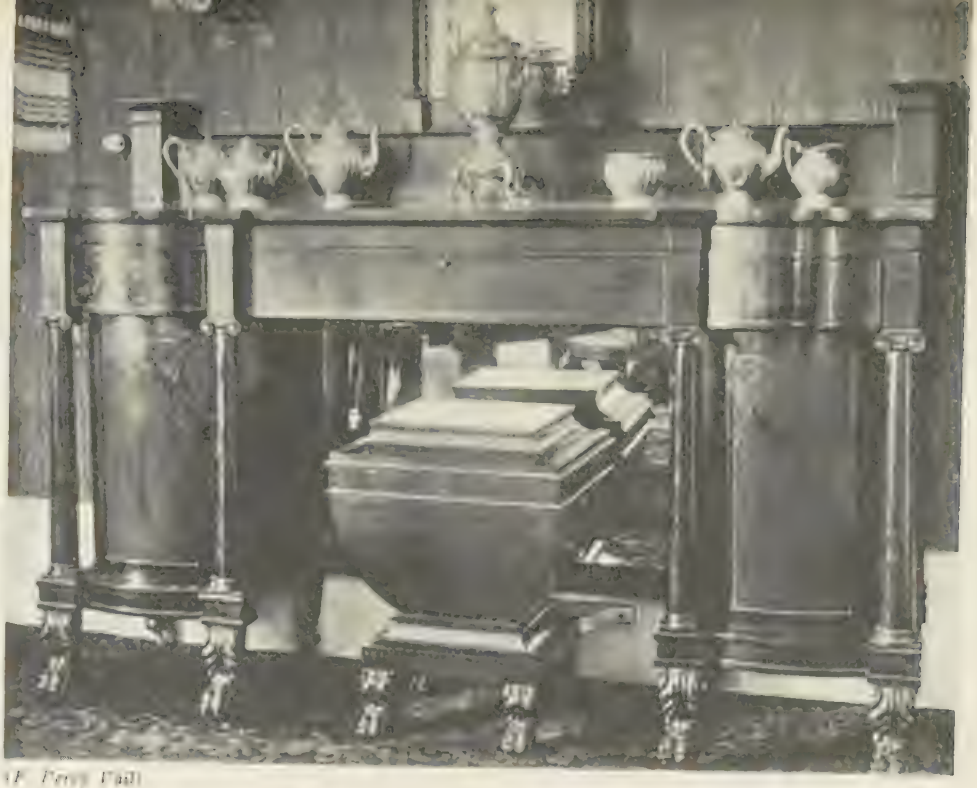
PLATE XXXI.—PHYFE'S OWN FURNITURE. PIECES FROM HIS HOME ON FULTON STREET NOW OWNED BY HIS DESCENDANTS.

(*F. Percy Vail*)

PLATE XXXII.—LOCHLIN PHYFE, WHO WAS ASSOCIATED WITH HIS BROTHER DUNCAN FOR MANY YEARS AND IS SAID TO HAVE RESEMBLED HIM.

bonds and railroad stocks and bonds, and $223,341.47 in promissory notes signed by various members of the Phyfe family.

This is the story of America's greatest furniture artist. It starts with the beginning of our national existence and extends to the days of distinct rumblings of sectional discord. During three-score years Phyfe lived in New York, but his fame rests primarily upon his accomplishments during the first half of this time. That was the Early Republican era. Of this he was the cabinet maker par excellence. At the same time other men of talent were at work elsewhere, but what they made was different and did not crystalize into an outstanding and distinct style of its own.



(F. Perry Walli

PLATE XXXIII.—PHYFE'S SIDEBOARD AND CELLARETTE. HE GAVE MRS. PHYFE THE SILVER SERVICE TO CELEBRATE THE END OF THE WAR OF 1812.

(*Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.*)

PLATE XXXIV.—A NEW ENGLAND PARLOR OF 1800.

CHAPTER IV

PHYFE'S CONTEMPORARIES

TO think of the half century following the inauguration of our Federal Government, from a furniture point of view, as being limited to the person of Duncan Phyfe, is a mistake. It is as if a hundred years hence, our day, automotivally, should be known only for Ford and his Models T and A. We know that Henry Ford does not make the only good motor cars. The same applies to Phyfe. While he was the chief and greatest of cabinet makers and designers of his age, he had a goodly company of contemporaries, remembered and forgotten.

From Maine to Georgia, the coastal towns and cities as well as those inland suffered no dearth of cabinet makers. Some of these, working in booming commercial centers, enjoyed just as rich and fastidious a clientele as he, but the majority catered to a less affluent public satisfied with sturdier and less ornamental furniture. Perhaps these men knew what Phyfe was doing, and per-

haps not. It matters not. Both they and Duncan, pride of New York's aristocracy, were subject to the same influences. Basically all followed the designs of the brothers Adam, George Hepplewhite and Thomas Sheraton. To these they added for seasoning according to taste a touch of the French influence. Proof that nearly every farming community had its cabinet maker is to be found by reading the local histories that the retired lawyers and clergy of the eighteen-forties turned out with such industry. These in the main were written with great accuracy and never failed to list all the business men living or gone before, together with the years of their activity. Cabinet making, not infrequently combined with farming or other callings including that of being the local coffin maker and undertaker, was a respected and profitable trade never overlooked by these early historians.

Some estimate of the amount of furniture these contemporaries of Phyfe produced may be gained by visiting long established households. Then remember the innumerable stories current in family after family of how from 1870 to 1900, the years of scorn for antique furniture, beds, bureaus, tables, chairs and the like were chopped

up for firewood. Nor should it be forgotten that in the towns where flourished ship building, the skilled workers employed chiefly on the trim and equipment of the cabins for masters and passengers devoted their slack seasons to furniture making. This was done either as a private venture or for the yard owners as a subsidiary part of the business. Furniture so made was either sold locally or carried in lieu of ballast, and found a ready market in the southern cotton and tobacco ports, which accounts for the pieces of distinctly New England furniture still to be found in parts of the South.

Although it would be an impossible task to cull all the early histories for a list of the names of cabinet makers of the Early Republican era, fortunately early volumes of the United States Census at times give some facts and figures about furniture making. If this started with the census of 1790 nothing could be sweeter, but unhappily some of these early national censuses were simply head-counting endeavors.

In 1810, however, when the total population of the United States was about comparable with the number of people now living in the five boroughs of New York City, industrial statistics

were gathered that give us scattering information about the cabinet makers and allied trades. For the district of Maine, the seventeen states, the five territories and the District of Columbia this census gives $1,919,223 as the value of the annual production of these trades. Of this $1,426,047 is for the 596 makers of "cabinet-wares"; $105,185 for 2206 dozen wooden chairs; $122,991, for the 14,569 wooden clocks; all but four of which were of Connecticut make, the four worth $36 being of Vermont make; $100,000 for the 12,000 "frames and looking glasses" credited to New Jersey, and $165,000 for the yearly output of the nine upholstery shops located in Pennsylvania.

These figures are quoted only as an indication. They are very incomplete and I believe the total value would be twice or thrice the amount given. In the listing of cabinet makers, the states credited, the number and the value of their output are, Maine and Massachusetts, number not given, but value $318,122 and $118,450 respectively; Pennsylvania, 482 cabinet makers; Maryland, 50 cabinet makers, with an output worth $217,043 a year. In Virginia the number is omitted but the value is given as $114,557 a year. Be-

sides this, Orleans, Louisiana and Illinois territories are credited with 52, 6 and 6 cabinet makers respectively with no annual value stated. In the chair making classification, Massachusetts and Virginia are the only states about which information is given. Here 1699 dozen chairs worth $96,060 are set down for Massachusetts, and 507 dozen chairs worth $9125 for Virginia.

Evidently census-taking in 1810 was so disorganized and the enumerators so lazy or uninformed that the executives in charge did not dare try to gather like figures for almost a generation. It was not until 1840 when the total population of the United States was 17,069,453, that like statistics were again included. But this time they did a real job and recorded 18,003 men working at furniture making in "establishments" representing a capital investment of $6,989,971 and producing for that year $7,555,405 worth.

In 1850, which can be said to mark the last day of the cabinet makers and the advent of present-day, factory production of furniture, the total number of men engaged in furniture making and allied trades was 83,580. Of these 37,359 were cabinet and chair makers; 1742 carvers and gilders; 112 frame makers; 294 look-

ing glass makers; 2592 upholsterers and paper hangers; 645 polishers and finishers; 4 stencilers; and 3823 turners. Beside this, 12,672 were listed as joiners who may have been either working at carpentry or furniture making. These figures are interesting when one remembers that our total population was then 23,191,876, and realizes that this census gives 2,363,958 as the total number of farmers, 909,789 for laborers, and 10,889 for factory hands.

Some of the other trades and professions listed are: chimney sweeps 59, actors 722, reporters 138, soldiers (evidently the total number of the regular army) 5149, and storekeepers 3747. By this time when the United States had expanded to thirty-two states and four territories the number of authors and pawnbrokers were nearly balanced being 82 and 72 respectively.

It is a great pity that through the generation and more covered by the statistics just summarized, it was the common trade practice of the cabinet makers to send out their pieces unlabeled, but in the main theirs was a localized trade. Probably they felt that their customers knew the sort of work they did and considered that identification enough. That we know was

Duncan Phyfe's attitude, for he only labeled a very few of his latest pieces, and then only by tacking on the business card of the firm then Duncan Phyfe & Son. Had labeling been common instead of very unusual we might today have a history of known furniture makers that would be every bit as authoritative and personal as that of our silversmiths. But fortunately now and then there was a cabinet maker who either by labeling or preëminence of work has made it possible for us today to identify him and his product.

Samuel McIntire, although more like the brothers Adam in that his chief fame rests on his houses and carving, deserves to be considered the peer of Duncan Phyfe. When he did make a piece of furniture it was every bit as graceful and delicately executed. McIntire was a product of Salem, Mass., where he was born in 1757 and died in 1811. It is interesting to notice that, unlike Phyfe, he did his best work in his later years. He never marked his furniture but a sufficient number of pieces have been found with carved ornamentation so akin to that of the houses he is known to have built to establish them as McIntire pieces. His favorite piece of furniture was

the sofa, and several of these are to be found in the collection of the Essex Institute at Salem, together with chairs to match.

His greatest work was the mansion he built for Elias Hasket Derby. This house completed in 1799 was the wonder of New England but unfortunately did not stand long. Hardly had it been completed when Derby died and his heirs tore down the house because they could not afford to maintain it. McIntire's son, Samuel F., who survived his father eight years, seems to have been every bit as talented, but intemperance wrecked him.

Still another New England cabinet maker of note, whose work and existence have recently been discovered, is Abner Toppan of Newbury, Mass. He slightly antedated Phyfe, being born in 1764. He died in 1836. The recent discovery by Dexter E. Spalding of a marked Toppan desk made for William Little in 1795 shows Toppan working more nearly in the Chippendale but using inlay ornamentation of the Hepplewhite style. A sideboard made about 1800 shows his transition to the Hepplewhite-Sheraton influence due to the changing taste. Little is known of his personal life save that he

was descended from Abraham Toppan who settled in Newbury in 1736. Abner was the son of Edward Toppan and the eleventh of twelve children. The Little desk Toppan sold for ten pounds, ten shillings.

Wealthy New York was not the only city that could boast of a furniture designer and maker of the first rank. A fortunate recent discovery identifies the man who occupied this position in Philadelphia. He was Henry Connelly and his sideboards show that he was a real master craftsman. His inspiration was that of Sheraton. Reeded legs, delicate carvings and reeding of edges in the earlier Phyfe manner characterizes Connelly's work. This Philadelphian, like Goddard and Savery, was a member of the Society of Friends. He is believed to have been born in Philadelphia in 1770. He died at Mill Creek Hundred near Newark, Delaware, in 1826. During his active years his shop was located at 44 Spruce street. His only activity outside of cabinet making was participation in "The Society for Relieving the Misery of Public Prisoners," in which he was for years prominent.

At the same time that Phyfe was beginning to captivate New York with his individualized

Sheraton pieces, the firm of Mills & Deming, located at 374 Queen street, later Pearl street, New York, was specializing in sideboards of the purest Hepplewhite design. The labeled sideboard made for Governor Oliver Walcott of Connecticut, about 1790, establishes their identity and reputation. Although this firm sets forth on its label that it "makes and sells all kinds of cabinet furniture and chairs, after the most modern fashions" the investigations of William Stuart Walcott, Jr. would seem to prove that its forte was the sideboard. In addition to identifying two of these by this firm, Mr. Walcott described eight others that seem to be of the same authorship. Since Simeon Deming of this partnership was born in Weathersford, Conn., in 1769, it is interesting to note that most of these sideboards seem to have gravitated back to the possession of long established Connecticut families. Deming moved to New York in 1813 continuing there until his death in 1855. Of Mills nothing has yet been established but quite possibly he came from the very numerous family of this name that flourished throughout Westchester county, New York, in the early nineteenth century.

(*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*)

PLATE XXXV.—ROOM AND FURNITURE BY SAMUEL McINTIRE. REMOVED FROM THE CAPT. DANIEL WEST HOUSE, PEABODY, MASS.

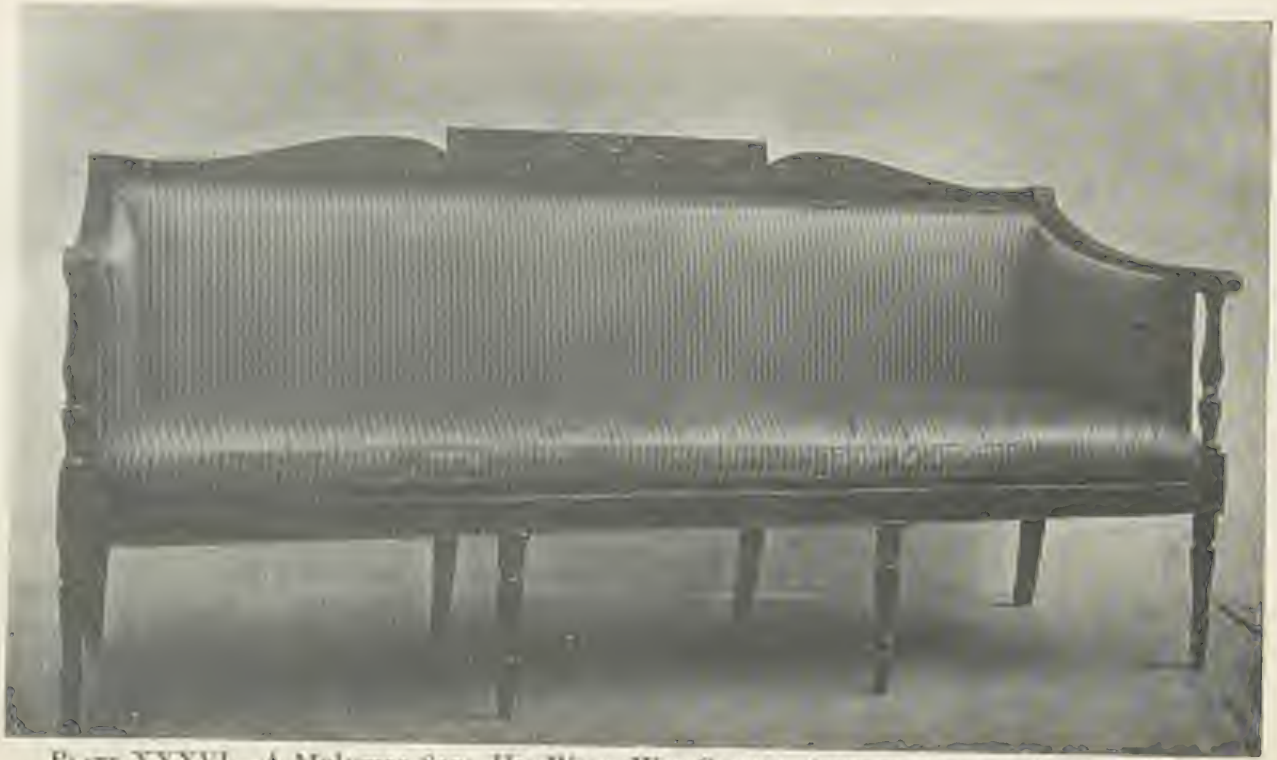


PLATE XXXVI.—A McINTIRE SOFA. HIS WORK WAS CLOSELY AKIN TO THAT OF DUNCAN PHYFE.
(*Essex Institute*)

Strangely enough, it was at New Brunswick, New Jersey, where now lives F. Percy Vail, Duncan Phyfe's great-grandson, referred to in the last section, that the Egertons, father, son and grandson, worked. Unlike Phyfe, these men seem to have favored the Hepplewhite mode and even their last pieces show little of the influence of Sheraton. Beauty of line, graceful inlay and rich veneering and grain of wood were the elements upon which they depended for that which makes their furniture distinctive.

Matthew Egerton, the first of the line, was born in 1739 and died in 1802. His son, Matthew, Jr., worked with his father and even before his father's death was in business for himself. Evidently he prospered, for by 1793 he was able to buy for one hundred and twenty pounds sterling a lot on Burnet street adjoining his father's shop. Incidentally the shop of the senior Egerton still stands. After his father's death, Matthew, Jr., seems to have taken over the business and to have added to the types of furniture the making of cases for tall clocks. These he executed in the most orthodox Hepplewhite manner. In turn Matthew II was joined by his son Evert and the firm became M. Egerton &

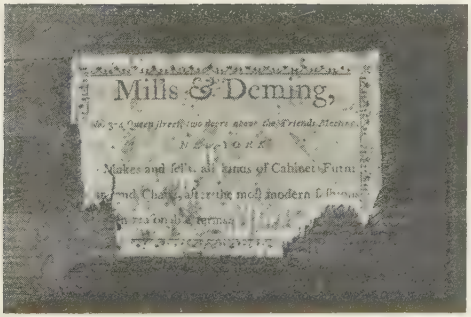
Son. Although there are plenty of local records of work done by them no pieces carrying their mark have as yet been found. Matthew II died in 1837, and his son quit cabinet making the following year, selling out to Isaac G. Sillcocks.

It is unfortunate that more is not known about Joseph Rawson and Son of Providence, and Robert Lawton, Jr. of Newport. Labeled pieces of theirs which have survived show that they were masters of the Hepplewhite school. A Robert Lawton table owned by Mr. Andrew Varick Stout of New York bears the date, "Newport, 20th of 5th Mon. 1794." Lawton must have been very painstaking for this piece is marked with the number seven. Possibly it was made soon after he set up in business for himself.

The Rawson secretary does not provide us with so much information. The label on the under side of a drawer reads,

Joseph Rawson & Son, Cabinet and Chair-Makers, near the theatre, Sugar Lane, Providence, Rhode Island.

Among the New York cabinet makers who were working during Phyfe's earlier years was Thomas Burling. Little is known of him as yet, save that he was in business in New York from



(William Stuart Walcott Jr.)

PLATE XXXVII.—A HEPPLEWHITE SIDEBOARD WITH LABEL OF MILLS & DEMING, NEW YORK. MADE ABOUT 1790 FOR GOV. OLIVER WALCOTT OF CONNECTICUT.

(*Herbert M. Waldron*)

PLATE XXXVIII.—MATTHEW EDGERTON SECRETARY WITH LABEL.

about 1790 to 1800. He probably was a member of the Burling family whose name is perpetuated in Burling Slip. A Sheraton inlaid-mahogany butler's secretary of his has been found which carries the following label:

Thos. Burling, Cabinet and Chair Maker, No. 56 Beekman Street, New York.

Michael Allison, who worked in New York about 1820, was not only a contemporary but a neighbor of Duncan Phyfe. A drop-leaf table of his, done somewhat in the Phyfe manner, bears this label:

M. Allison's Cabinet and Upholstery Furniture Warehouse, No. 46 & 48, Vesey Street, New York, May, 1817.

John Seymour and Son, of Boston, were hardly known until a labeled, mahogany, Hepplewhite secretary from their hands sold recently in New York for $30,000. This delicately-made piece has sliding tambour shutters ornamented with inlay festoons, while the legs, drawer fronts and top are decorated with typical satinwood inlay.

Peter Grinnell and Son, of Providence, specialized in mirrors. They were in business for

some years during the early part of the 19th Century, and had a factory where they made looking-glasses and picture-frames. A Sheraton carved and gilded mirror with their label on the back definitely identifies them, and gives a glimpse of the trade conditions of the day. It reads:

Looking-Glass & Picture-Frame Manufactory, Providence. Looking-Glass in Gilt and Mahogany Frames, of the newest fashions, constantly on hand, at wholesale and retail; Gilt Frames and Glasses for all kinds of Needle Work, Portraits and Pictures, Looking-Glass Plates, Window-Glass of every size, Linseed Lamp and Whale-Oil, with a large assortment of Paints, Ship-Chandlery and Hard-Ware. Peter Grinnell and Son, Main-Street, nearly opposite the Providence Bank.

Other known mirror-makers of this time whose labeled pieces have been found were Kidder and Carter of Charlestown, Massachusetts; Cermenati and Bernarda of Salem, Massachusetts; and Charles Del Vecchio of New York.

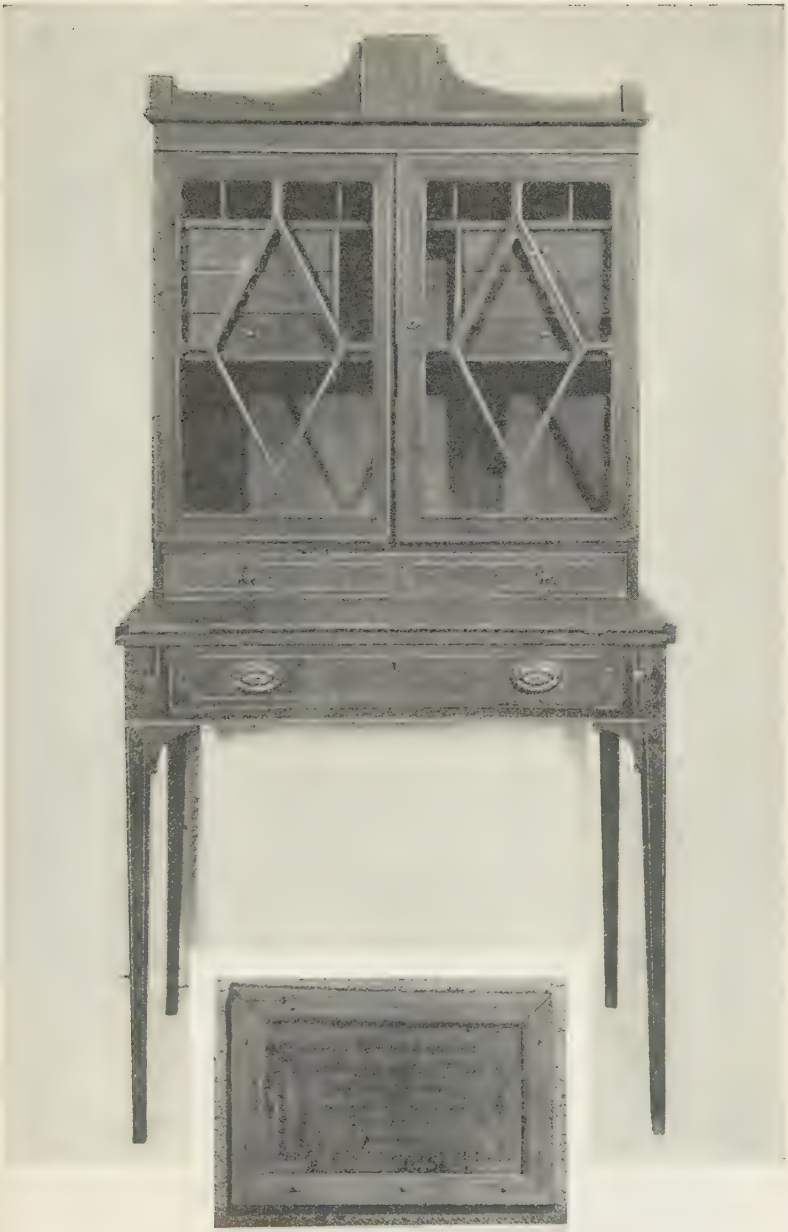
Although contemporary with Phyfe, in the Pennsylvania Dutch country, there worked, among others, two men and their sons who carried on in an entirely different mode. Theirs was painted furniture of Germanic Europe. The tra-

dition for this of course came with their people from the Counties Palatine of the Rhine Valley. This was a strong heredity and many cabinet makers of the Pennsylvania Dutch were governed by it. They made practically all types of furniture but it is the signed dower chests of John Seltzer and Johann Rank that have survived. Both of these men lived in Jonestown. Seltzer was born in 1749 and died in 1831 at the age of 81. Rank was born in 1763 and died in 1828. When they and their families came to Jonestown is unknown but chests by Seltzer dating from as early as 1771 have been found. By 1795 he had his sons working for him and it is difficult to know just which was the work of the senior Seltzer after this.

The Ranks, father and son, were working as early as 1795 and in general their chests are not unlike those of the Seltzer family. All were simple in construction with a moulded lid and block feet. Their beauty depended upon the painted panels of somewhat conventionalized flowered designs which adorned the fronts and sometimes the lids and ends.

The men mentioned in this section are but a few of the many whose work still survives but

as the rest failed to label their pieces, they must of necessity fall into the ranks of the unknown. The handiwork of these forgotten cabinet-makers, however, speaks for itself and shows that they were workmen of ability and taste with a fine sense of proportion, and a skill not to be ignored.



(*American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc.*)

PLATE XXXIX.—A HEPPLEWHITE SECRETARY WITH LABEL BY JOSEPH RAWSON & SON, PROVIDENCE.

(*Andrew Varick Stout*)

PLATE XL.—A LABELED HEPPLEWHITE TABLE BY ROBERT LAWTON OF NEWPORT. IT IS NUMBERED AND DATED MAY 20TH, 1794.

CHAPTER V

PLAIN AND FANCY CHAIR MAKING

CHAIRS, strange as it may seem, were not common articles of household furniture as early as tables, beds, chests, benches and the like. In fact, in England, the chair was unusual and reserved for the noble and important, at least till the time of Queen Elizabeth, and did not come into anything like general use before Charles I had parted company with his head in accordance with the sentence passed by Oliver Cromwell's regicide judges. Prior to this, the common people and those of less importance in the households of the great had to be content to seat themselves on benches, settles and sturdily constructed "joyned" stools.

In the New World, in the matter of chairs things were different from the start and in time Americans did original things in chair making. Even John Alden, our first cabinet maker, seems to have been a chair maker. There still survives at Duxbury, Massachusetts, a chair which has

been passed on from generation to generation as Alden's own chair of his own make. If this is true, and who can say it is not, it is very interesting, for we might with safety ascribe to "Speak for Yourself John" the Carver, the Brewster and other chairs credited to the first two decades of the Plymouth plantation. But to prove authorship after three hundred years would be a feat indeed, so for definite information as to the presence of chair makers on this side of the Atlantic we must content ourselves with knowing that such men as Jonathan Johnson of Lynn, Samuel Poor of Newbury and Miles Ward of Salem were all following the calling of chair maker as distinct from that of cabinet maker prior to 1700. Then for the next century chair making was, in the main, part of the work of any cabinet maker, and such master cabinet makers as William Savery, Jonathan Gostelowe, Thomas Tufft and General Marinus Willet in their own labels and advertising described themselves as chair makers or as chair makers and cabinet makers, despite the fact that they were not specialists but rather general practitioners of the art of furniture making.

In time, however, chair making became a specialty, a craft carried on by itself. This it remained until modern factory production replaced the establishments of masters with their journeymen and apprentices. But we owe much to these very masters of chair making. It was they who developed the Windsor, the painted "fancy" and the rocking chair. The last of these was purely an American invention, while the painted fancy chair and the Windsor, both of English origin, were developed by American workers in both design and ornamentation to a point that left the English far behind.

Windsor chairs were introduced from England about 1725. This distinctive type is commonly considered to have originated in the village that nestles under the lea of Windsor castle about a half century before. This, I believe, is fiction. There still survive in England several massive oaken chairs considered to be of Gothic origin which have passed unnoticed by the writers on old furniture. Such an one is to be seen at the hospital of St. Cross near Winchester. Anyone who sees one of these cannot help but recognize it as a Windsor in primitive form. Therefore, this chair form is much older al-

though undoubtedly it first came to fashionable notice in the village whose name it took.

Of this rudimentary Windsor I have never seen but one of American origin. This was recently discovered at Bedford, New York, and, like its primary ancestor, has but three legs and a very low back but is of much lighter construction. A low back was characteristic of the first Windsors made in America. These were produced in Philadelphia where the cabinet makers soon elaborated their design adding a high comb back, beautifully turned legs, stretchers and arm supports and generally glorifying it until Windsors became socially acceptable anywhere except in the formal drawing rooms of the wealthy.

For a while they were called Philadelphia chairs. Thus, we find James C. Tuttle, chairmaker of Salem, Massachusetts, advertising Philadelphia chairs, but gradually this gave way and all along the Atlantic seaboard men who specialized in their making were known as Windsor chair makers. As this spread, particularly to New England and New York, the Windsor took on many forms. Some were made with high backs with single and double combs, others had a simple hoop back with or without

arms, and finally appeared the Windsor writing chair. This ancestor of the quick-lunch chair with its broad right arm, frequently had a small drawer beneath the arm for quill pens, nut-gall ink and sand, and sometimes a second drawer under the seat for writing paper and the like. They usually had the high back and comb top and were nearly always made with the writing arm stationary. Sometimes, however, the writing arm was on a pivot so that it might be swung closer to the writer. Occasionally one is to be found with the writing arm on the left side; evidently a special order chair.

In half a century the Windsor had risen to such high estate that they were found in many places of public meeting. For instance when the First Continental Congress met in Philadelphia at Carpenters' Hall on September 5, 1774, the members sat in Windsors which are still to be seen there. To the presiding officer was assigned an imposing high-backed chair, while the members had to content themselves with simpler hoop-backed ones. Windsor chairs were again waiting when the Second Continental Congress assembled in Independence Hall on May 5, 1775, and it was from such that the members rose

to go forward to sign the Declaration of Independence. After the Revolution was over and Washington had returned to Mt. Vernon, to lead as he hoped a quiet uneventful life, press of visitors necessitated his ordering thirty Windsors for the east portico. Here his callers could be seated while they waited their turn. This is particularly interesting in the light of the fact that, before the difference with England, Washington, in ordering chairs from his London factor, complained that those of native make were not strong enough "for common sitting." Either the Virginia chair makers improved their product or Washington's patriotism led him to overlook the frailty of the domestic product.

One of the first Windsor chair makers of record is Richmonde, first name unknown, of Sassafras street, Philadelphia, where he was working in 1763. The similarity between the identified Richmonde chair and that of the presiding officer in Carpenters' Hall makes it seem probable that he was the man who made these historic Windsors. Another of the eighteenth century specialists in this type was John Wadsworth of Hartford. *The American Mercury*, published in Hartford on January 4, 1796, contains an ad-

(*American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc.*)

PLATE XLI.—A BUTLER SECRETARY. THIS IS LABELED "THOS. BURLING, CABINET AND CHAIR MAKER, NO. 56 BEEKMAN STREET, NEW YORK."

(*Formerly in the Hudnut Collection*)

PLATE XLII.—ALEXANDER HAMILTON'S LIBRARY TABLE.

vertisement by Wadsworth in which he states that he has come to Hartford "to carry on the Windsor chairmaking business," and that he wants "one or two likely boys 13 or 14 years old," as apprentices as well as "to purchase a quantity of square edged white wood plank, from 18 to 20 inches wide," evidently to convert into Windsor chair seats, as pine or white wood was the favorite material. The accounting for the furnishing of the old Connecticut State House shows that Wadsworth was paid, in May 1796, 70 pounds 13 shillings for such "settees and chairs."

In New York specializing in the making of Windsors was a thriving business with a number of men devoting themselves to it. Among the earliest was Thomas Ash with his shop located at either 31 or 33 John Street from 1786 until 1815. Ash was a liberal advertiser and evidently did a business of considerable size but either he did not mark his chairs or none has survived. We do know, however, that one of his apprentices was Richard Tweed, father of William Marcy Tweed, famous as Boss Tweed, head of the unsavory ring that controlled New York politically during the dreadful decade following

the Civil War. This son was also a chair maker until he foreswore the paternal craft for politics. Of him and others who turned from furniture-making to public affairs more will be written in a later section.

Another New Yorker to give himself over to Windsor chair making was Andrew Gautier whose Pre-Revolutionary newspaper advertising is illustrated with a high-backed chair of the most approved Philadelphia pattern. Coming after Ash and Gautier was McBride, two or three of whose simpler chairs branded with his name still survive. There was John K. Cowperthwaite who with the beginning of the nineteenth century combined Windsor and fancy chair making at his, in 1818, "long-established Factory, No. 4, Chatham Square." Cowperthwaite, whose descendants still continue in the furniture business in New York, however, was more of a fancy chair man than a maker of Windsors, and as such I classify him.

In addition to all of those in the various cities, towns and villages who followed the trade of Windsor chair maker—and I believe that if an accurate list of them could be compiled the total number would easily pass the half thousand

mark—many other chairs and settees of this sort were turned out by farmers in their own homes. Such a simple bow-backed Windsor has descended to me. It was the work of a great-great-grandfather. He made it before the fireplace of his New Hampshire farm-house in the course of a winter, hewing the seat from a white wood plank and fashioning the spindles from hickory cut on his wood lot. The turned legs and stretchers are of maple or birch while the U-shaped arm is of oak showing distinct traces of quarter sawing. These elements, I believe, are not the product of my forebear's handicraft but were rather bought by him either at a general store or from a local woodturner. General stores, prior to 1825, carried "chair parts" as one of the regular items. I have seen old inventories of New England stores that list so many "bundles of chair parts," usually valued at 50 cents a bundle.

How common was the practice of fabricating Windsors at home, I cannot say, but as a boy in Vermont, I frequently saw simple chairs of this sort that were said to be the handiwork of a father or a grandfather. Always the tale was the same as in my own family. The chairs were winter work, done before the great fireplace when

storm prevented out-of-door employment. To such farm origin, therefore, I ascribe many of the simpler Windsors, both side and arm, which are still to be found in the agricultural areas. How late they were thus made, is hard to say, but 1835 may be considered the end of the period.

In chair shops and chair factories the Windsor continued to be made for many years. Here, strangely enough, the design reverted to something akin to the earliest low-backed form. The turned parts became heavier, and seat and arms less carefully shaped. The late decadent-primitive Windsors also took on something of the fancy chair in that they were painted and decorated with stripings and sometimes stenciled in gilt. They were the store, office and hotel chair from before the Mexican War down to the early eighteen eighties and were very popular indeed. A study of the illustrated catalogs of various manufacturers brings to light many styles and designs of chairs that are basically Windsor. Sometimes the seats were solid and at others caned or of perforated three-ply veneer. The Walter Heywood Chair Company of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, in its catalog of 1885 shows eighteen different chair designs that are all of

(Pennsylvania Museum, Memorial Hall, Philadelphia)

PLATE XLIII.—A PAINTED DOWER CHEST: TYPICAL OF THE WORK OF THE SELZER-RANK FAMILIES.

B

C

A

D

E

PLATE XLIV.—WINDSOR CHAIRS FROM PRIMITIVE TO DECADENT. A. THE PRIMITIVE GOTHIC CHAIR AT THE HOSPITAL OF ST. CROSS, WINCHESTER, ENGLAND; B, C AND D. TYPICAL AMERICAN WINDSORS; E. DECADENT FORM OF 1850.

the decadent-primitive Windsor sort, as well as a line of Windsor tops mounted upon a typical revolving office chair base, and a number of children's high and miniature chairs of similar parentage. Other manufacturers' books show such chairs and sometimes settees or benches of the Windsor strain as late as 1894. Evidently the demand for this type was so strong that even the Black Walnut age could not kill it.

Like the Windsor, the fancy chair was also of English origin. For this type the American makers were indebted to Thomas Sheraton. In his attempt to adapt the French mode of the early days of Napoleon he produced the ancestor of all fancy chairs. Sheraton and the English did comparatively little with this new chair style but not so the Americans. For, modifying the idea to suit their public, the chair makers of the United States seized upon this Sheraton design and made it a trade by itself. All through New England and New York shops given over to the fancy chair, as well as more isolated ones in other of the coastal states, were soon to be found. Their product was not only sold locally but shipped in quantity to the Southern states then almost entirely given over to agriculture. Later

making fancy chairs for export, chiefly to the West Indies, was an important factor.

The New York City Directory of 1810 carries the advertisement of William Buttre, and of 1815 Charles Fredericks. By 1818 W. Palmer, William Brown, Jun., and John K. Cowperthwaite are likewise advertising themselves as sources of fancy chairs. Cowperthwaite became the most important of these men. In 1825 he was president of the Master Chair Makers Society and as such he headed the third division of the civic parade that marked the opening of the Erie Canal. Both this society and that of the journeymen took part. The 200 men of the fancy chair making craft who marched in this parade were resplendent with badges and banners which pictured the fancy chair in all its glory and carried the mottoes, "Rest for the Weary" and "By Industry We Thrive." [1] The latter was of course

[1] Colden, Cadwallader D., "Memoir, prepared at the request of a Committee of the Common Council of the City of New York, and presented to the Mayor of the City, at the celebration of the completion of the New York Canals," New York, 1825.

See plate entitled "Chairmakers' Society," which is described by Mr. Colden as follows:

"This plate contains two circular wreathes, abreast of each other; on the dexter side is a figure of Plenty, the cornucopiae at her feet, and resting her left hand upon a fancy chair; in her rear, is an Indian corn field, at the foot of a high mountain; in the distance is a village, with a chair manufactory; in the far distance is a ship in New York Bay, with

that of the journeymen, for then it was good taste for workmen to boast of their industry rather than to assail industry as the oppressor.

But New York was not the only fancy chair town. Thousands were made in other centers. Salem was a notable one. An analysis of the section of Artists and Craftsmen of Essex County, Massachusetts, compiled by Henry W. Belknap, devoted to the men of the furniture crafts disclosed some interesting data. From "the earliest days" to 1860 it lists 604 furniture makers. Of these, thirty-two were chair makers and seventeen worked at the trade during the fifty years of the approximate two centuries covered. A bill of Henry Hubon of Salem reproduced in the Essex Institute publication just cited, dated November 22, 1820, lists among other things "eight fancy chairs—$35.00." This was $4.35

Castle Williams, on Governor's Island, on her starboard bow: and in the farthest distance is New York. Beneath, on a labelled ribbon, is the motto, 'By Industry we thrive.'

"On the sinister wreath is the Chairmakers Arms; the shield is divided into three compartments—one across the upper part, separated horizontally —and two beneath, subdivided vertically; on the superior division is a fancy setee; on the lower dexter compartment Gules, is a square-bottomed fancy chair; and on the sinister, Azure, is another round-seated one. The crest is a Chairmakers boring bitt, crossed vertically by a shaving tool. On a label beneath is the motto, 'Rest for the Weary.'

"These wreathes were borne on either side of the Banner of this Society, on the day of Celebration."

each—a fairly high price considering that the same bill includes "a field bed—$15.00" and "a common bed—$8.00."

In design the fancy chair was quite simple. The two front legs and the rung between were nicely turned. The rest of the parts except for the cross members of the back were simply made. In the earliest of the fancy chairs the seat was of rush but later either cane or solid wooden seats were used. It was the decoration which, from a stylistic viewpoint, made this chair. After the entire frame had been painted with an almost black background, usually relieved with reddish lines to imitate graining, the striping and stenciling in parcel gilt were applied. The stencil designs were usually of the conventionalized leaf and fruit sort, although occasionally they were more ambitious and included houses, fountains, birds, trees and the like. A unique chair, found a few years ago in Pennsylvania, has a low relief bust of General Lafayette cast in lead as the center of the decoration of the back and an eagle medallion of the same sort on the center of the lower cross slat of the back. This chair was made about 1825 when Lafayette returned to the United States as the guest of the nation.

(American Philosophical Society)

PLATE XLV.—THOMAS JEFFERSON'S WRITING WINDSOR. IN THIS HE WROTE HIS FIRST DRAFT OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. BUILT TO JEFFERSON'S DESIGN. THE SEAT REVOLVES.

(*American Philosophical Society*)

PLATE XLVI.—FRANKLIN'S LIBRARY CHAIR. ITS SEAT FOLDS OVER AND BECOMES A STEPLADDER.

Of all the men who devoted themselves to fancy chair making the one whose name and work are best known is Lambert Hitchcock of Hitchcockville, Connecticut. Born in Cheshire, not far from that part of the "land of steady habits, horn gun flints and basswood pumpkin seeds" which saw the development of inexpensive clocks with brass works, he was a typical Connecticut Yankee with a bent for manufacturing a product that could be widely sold in quantity.

In 1818 Hitchcock left his native town and settled in Barkhamsted upon the Farmington river two miles northwest of Winsted. At first he devoted himself to making chair parts for shipment to Charleston, S. C. Evidently he prospered rapidly, for by 1821 a settlement had grown up around his water-power driven shop known as Hitchcockville. Shortly after this he gave up making parts and turned to producing complete chairs of the fancy variety but distinct enough to be recognized as his work even if they did not carry the legend, "L. Hitchcock, Warranted." Later, this was changed to: "L. Hitchcock, Hitchcockville, Ct." Then by 1829 the label changed to Hitchcock, Alford & Co.—

Alfred Alford and Hitchcock had married sisters, built a big house in common and become partners in the business. In 1843, for causes not known, Hitchcock left and the enterprise was carried on under the style of Alford & Co. by Alfred Alford and his brother, Arba. The Hitchcock factory and the joint house are still standing but the settlement, since 1866, has been known as Riverton. The old shop is now a rubber factory and the double residence is a single home of 18 rooms. When built there was a solid wall dividing it running from cellar to attic. Only in the apartment in the wing designed for the common mother-in-law of the two men was there any door conecting the Hitchcock and Alford sides.

After leaving Hitchcockville the man for whom it was named was for a time at the Unionville Chair Company shops located near Collinsville. Later he is believed to have worked at the Camp shops at Robertsville about two miles west of Hitchcockville. At neither place were chairs turned out which bore the Hitchcock name. Those of the Camp shops carried the label, Union Chair Company, West Winsted, Ct., stenciled on the back edge of the seat—the same

place that the Hitchcock chairs were marked. The Unionville chairs were stenciled with the words, Unionville Chair Co.

In the height of its glory the Hitchcock factory employed upwards of a hundred men and women, the latter doing the stencil work. Not only did they make the chair called a Hitchcock but also added a line of those distinctive rocking-chairs known as the Boston rocker. Who invented this is not known but from about 1820 until post-Civil War days it was an extremely popular chair.

The rocking-chair was a purely American invention. Tradition credits it to no less a person than Benjamin Franklin. This seems plausible for in the journal of the Rev. Manasseh Cutler under the date of Friday, July 13, 1787, in recording an afternoon and an evening spent with the venerable sage of Philadelphia, he describes several of Franklin's inventions. This list included "his great arm chair, with rockers and a large fan placed over it, with which he fans himself, keeps off flies, etc., while he sits reading, with only a small motion of his foot; and many other curiosities and inventions, all his own, but of lesser note." Whether Franklin was the in-

ventor or not, we find rocking-chairs mentioned before the Revolution. A bill of the famous William Savery to Mrs. Mary Norris of February 11, 1774, includes "to bottoming a rocking-chair —one shilling, ten pence." As this was a charge for a repair, chairs with rockers existed before this date. The attaching of rockers, as nearly as can be traced from surviving chairs, seems first to have been done to those not originally so designed. The earliest examples show that the legs were cut off and rockers added. These were at first simply of board curved on the lower side and straight along the upper edge. Gradually the rocker itself began to take more definite shape and the upper edge became more and more concave. By about 1825, the design as we know it had been devised through a course of trial and error. It is evident that this chair in which one could sit and rock was extremely popular, for practically all forms of the Windsor, the slat back, the banister back, the lyre-backed Empire and the painted fancy chair, are to be found equipped with rockers. This was either done originally or as a modernizing effort.

Like the Windsor chair, the Boston rocker and the painted fancy chair also survived several

decades after the decline of chair making as a specialized craft. Study of manufacturer's catalogs of the eighteen-eighties proves this, for here are shown a number of designs which otherwise would seem to date distinctly from 1850 or before.

Fancy & Windsor Chair Manufactory.

An extensive assortment of the above articles constantly on hand, and for sale, Wholesale and Retail at the lowest prices, warranted well finished, at the long established factory

No 4 Chatham-Square, extending through to No. 2 Catherine-street.

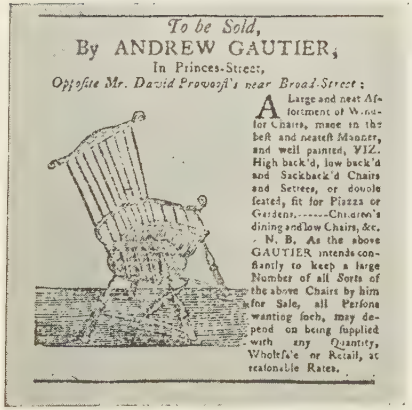
M

NEW YORK, May 11 1825

TO JOHN K. COWPERTHWAITE, DR.

(*New York Historical Society*)

PLATE XLVII.—BILL OF JOHN K. COWPERTHWAITE. DATED MAY 11, 1825.



To be Sold,
By ANDREW GAUTIER,
In Princes-Street,
Opposite Mr. David Provoost's near Broad-Street;

A Large and neat Assortment of Windsor Chairs, made in the best and neatest Manner, and well painted, VIZ. High back'd, low back'd and Sackback'd Chairs and Settees, or double seated, fit for Piazza or Gardens,------Children's dining and low Chairs, &c.

N. B. As the above GAUTIER intends constantly to keep a large Number of all Sorts of the above Chairs by him for Sale, all Persons wanting such, may depend on being supplied with any Quantity, Wholesale or Retail, at reasonable Rates.

PLATE XLVIII. — ADVERTISEMENT OF ANDREW GAUTIER. FROM "NEW YORK GAZETTE," APRIL 18, 1765.

NEW-YORK ANNUAL ADVERTISER.

FANCY AND WINDSOR

CHAIR MANUFACTORY.

THOMAS ASH,

No. 33 JOHN-STREET,

Having, by the death of his father, succeeded to the long established and well known manufactory of Fancy and Windsor Chairs, takes occasion to solicit, from the public, a continuance of the favor swhich have been so long and so liberally bestowed upon his predecessor. He has already in employ a number of the very best and most tasteful workmen, and is ready to receive orders, which will be executed with fidelity and promptness. Those persons who may please to favour him with their commands, may rely upon a strict attention to the execution of their orders. On hand, an assortment of Chairs, both Fancy and Windsor, of the newest fashions, and suited for domestic use or the foreign market.

PLATE XLIX.—THE ASH FAMILY WERE OUTSTANDING WINDSOR CHAIR MAKERS IN NEW YORK.

CHAPTER VI

YANKEE CLOCK MAKERS

ALTHOUGH Old World masters had practised the mysteries of horology from before Reformation days, it was not until Yankee ingenuity addressed itself to clock making that timepieces were made at a price low enough so that the average family could not afford to be clockless. Incredible as it may seem, until about 1800 common folks, generally speaking, had to satisfy themselves with sun dials, noon marks, hour glasses, turnip sized, triple-cased silver watches and an uncannily accurate facility for time telling by the sun. Until then clock makers had fundamentally adhered to a single production method. The movements, that is, the wheels and frames, were laboriously hand-fashioned from cast brass. What they made was fine, but the method was so individualistic that the price had to be high, and output remained limited.

Why some of the hundreds of men who de-

voted themselves to clock making did not devise a simpler and less expensive plan than the hand-filed-cast-brass scheme seems strange. The solution of this manufacturing problem, however, had to await the advent of two groups of New Englanders. One was the Connecticut clock makers of the Naugatuck valley; the other centered around the Willard family of Massachusetts. To the former school we are indebted for low-priced, wooden-works clocks, and later the cheap clock with a movement of stamped brass. The Willard brothers, sons and cousins, produced and refined the banjo clock idea. This product of the area of plain living and high thinking is the United States' most distinctive contribution to clock designing, not only because of its unique form of case but also by reason of simplification of the movement judged from the viewpoint of machine design. The Willards were a clock making family trained in the old traditions, but not so with the men of the Naugatuck valley. With but one or two exceptions they were woodworking craftsmen who came into horology from clock-case making. Free of the traditions of the craft, they successfully adapted new materials and devised water-power

driven machines, with which to cut clock wheels, in such quantities as to be able to make a presentable clock that could be sold for under ten dollars. This was distinctly an early demonstration of what could be accomplished by mass production even on a limited scale. Such clocks answered a long felt want and almost over night Plymouth Hollow, Bristol, Waterbury, Winsted, Norwich, East Windsor and so forth were clock towns known by their product throughout the length and breadth of the land, as well as in practically every foreign land where Yankee ships went a-trading.

By careful searching of old newspapers and records, a list of American clock makers from early days down to about 1860 has been compiled, which numbers 852 individuals and companies. Some of these are only slight variations in name, but again names of clock makers which I know were in business during the period are omitted, so it is fair to consider that 850 closely approximates the total number of American clock makers in business for themselves prior to 1860. Of this number the majority came after 1800. The total for the entire pre-Revolutionary period, over a century and a half, is but 67. Of

these, only two came before 1700, and 22 during the years from 1700 to 1750.

The household trade of American clock makers before 1800 was largely in making movements for tall clocks. These, acting as their own peddlers, they sold frequently direct to the householder, who either had a cabinet maker produce the case, or mounted them caseless on a wall bracket. "Hang-up movements" was the trade name for those that went caseless. When so installed, because the pendulum could be seen swinging back and forth, they were popularly called "wag-on-the-walls." Making large clocks for meeting-house spires was also an important part of the business of these men. These spire clocks were more or less community affairs. Men of a neighborhood contributed to the cost, and so everybody could have at least one clock to guide them. Sometimes, however, getting such subscriptions was not easy. At least one record survives of a protest against sharing in the cost of a meeting-house timepiece. This was on the ground that the objectors lived so far away they could not possibly read the face of the clock.

None of the work of the two American clock makers who antedated 1700 has survived, but

FANCY CHAIR STORE.

WILLIAM BROWN, Jun.

No. 80 Beekman-street, New-York, has constantly for sale, a large assortment of Elegant, well-made and highly finished Fancy Chairs, Settees, Conversation, Elbow, Rocking, Sewing, Windsor, and Children's Chairs, of every description, on the most moderate terms.

*** Orders from any part of the continent will be attended to with punctuality and despatch. A liberal allowance made to shippers, &c.

☞ Old chairs repaired, varnished and re-gilt.

NEW-YORK ANNUAL ADVERTISER.

JAPAN AND FANCY CHAIRS,

No. 7 Wall-street.

W. PALMER,

at his long established shop, *No. 7 Wall-street*, has a large and elegant assortment of Japan, Bronzed and Curled Maple Chairs and Settees, of Cane and Rush seats, manufactured in the best and most tasteful manner.

Persons who are pleased to favor him with orders, whether for domestic use or for exportation, may rely upon their commands being executed with fidelity and punctuality.

CROMIC YELLOW.

After numerous and expensive experiments, the subscriber has succeeded in making this new and beautiful PAINT a permanent color, and now offers it to the public wholesale and retail, at a reduced price, warranted both pure and durable, by

WILLIAM PALMER, No. 7 Wall-street.

NEW-YORK ANNUAL ADVERTISER.

NEW-YORK

FANCY CHAIR

WAREHOUSE.

CHARLES FREDERICKS,

No. 17 BOWERY,

OPPOSITE PELL STREET.

HAS ON HAND

AN ELEGANT ASSORTMENT OF

FANCY & WINDSOR CHAIRS,

SETTEES & CHILDREN'S CHAIRS

of the newest fashions and well finished, which he offers for sale on the most reasonable terms.

*** *All orders will be thankfully received and punctually attended to.* Orders from any part of the continent will be attended to with punctuality and despatch.

A liberal allowance made to shippers, &c.

N. B. Old chairs repaired, painted and re-gilt.

FANCY CHAIR STORE.

WILLIAM BUTTRE,

No. 17, Bowery-Lane, near the Watch-House, New-York,

HAS CONSTANTLY FOR SALE,

A large assortment of elegant, well-made, and highly finished Black, White, Brown, Coquelico, Gold and Fancy Chairs, Settees, Conversation, Elbow, Rocking, Sewing, Windsor, and Children's Chairs of every description, and on the most moderate terms.

Orders from any part of the continent will be attended to with punctuality and despatch. A liberal allowance made to Shippers, &c.

☞ *Old chairs repaired, varnished and re-gilt.*

PLATE L.—ADVERTISEMENTS OF NEW YORK CHAIR MAKERS PRIOR TO 1820.

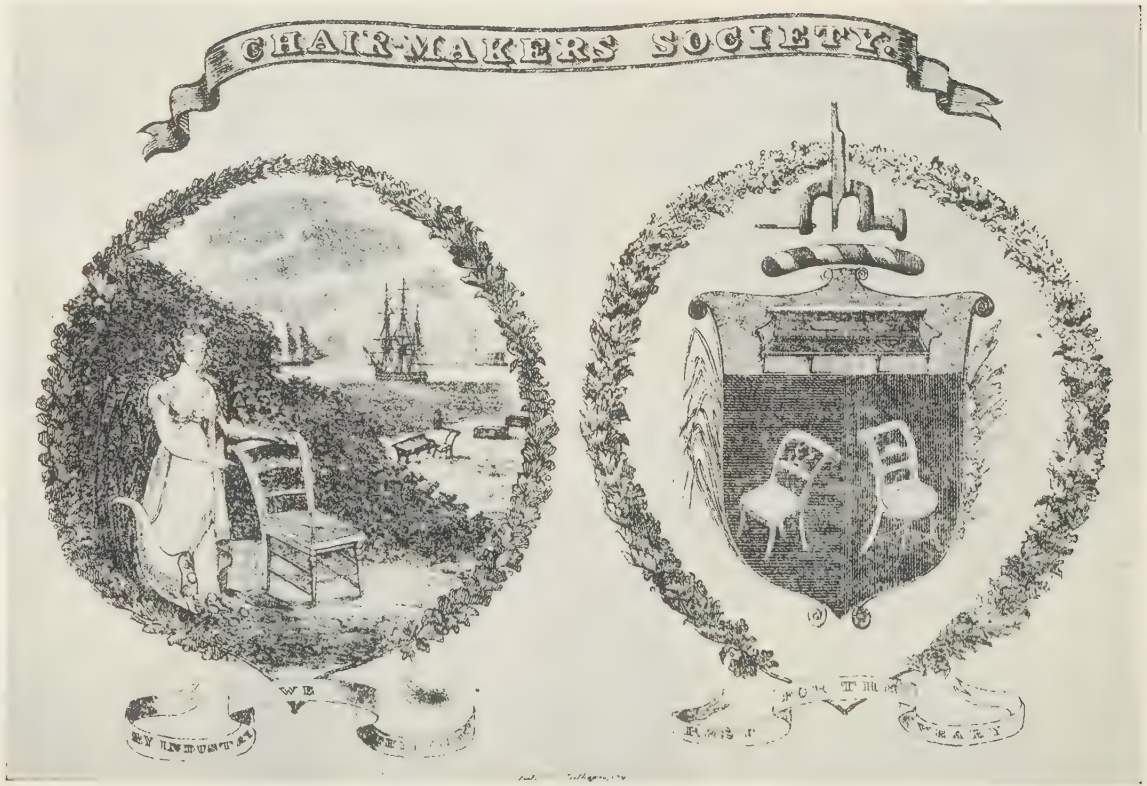


PLATE LI.—THE BANNERS OF THE NEW YORK CHAIR MAKERS. MASTER AND WORKMEN.

we do know some interesting facts about Evardus Bogardus of New York City, and William Davis of Boston. The former, who flourished in 1698, was the son of Dominie Evardus Bogardus, the Dutch Reform parson of the time that Peter Minuit was Governor General of New Amsterdam. Incidentally this clergyman's bowery or farm later became the basis of the Trinity Church lands, and, were it still in Bogardus' hands, would make them the landlords of Wall Street. Whether Bogardus went back to Holland to learn his trade or not is unknown but he undoubtedly followed the clock-making style of Huygens, the Leyden master, credited with perfecting the pendulum.

William Davis, who arrived in Boston in 1683, is not recorded as a member of the London Clock-makers Company. The circumstance that David Edwards became surety that Davis and family would not become town charges—evidently pauper immigrants were a problem then as later—indicates that he was a penniless journeyman.

Of the twenty-two men who followed the art of clock making in America between 1700 and 1750, several are worth mentioning. Avery, first

name forgotten, Boston, 1727, produced the clock that still hangs in the Old North church. This is the timepiece that set Paul Revere off on his famous midnight gallop across Middlesex. Benjamin and Timothy Cheney of East Hartford, now Manchester, Conn., 1745-80, were among New England's best. They made tall clocks and provided them with cases of neatly carved cherry. Incidentally John Fitch, now conceded to be the inventor of the steamboat idea, was an apprentice in their shop.

At Guilford, Conn., Ebenezer Parmalee flourished from 1726-1740. Among other things he made the first clock for the New Haven meeting house, and in 1726 one for the church at Guilford. This latter movement continued in use until 1893 and, still in running order, is on exhibit in the town of its origin.

The first of the outstanding Pennsylvania clock makers was Christopher Souers, who arrived in Philadelphia in 1724. Clock making was not the only thing he could do. His other callings were author, printer, paper maker, doctor, and farmer. Just to prove his versatility, he spelled his name Sower when following these other livelihoods.

Nearly contemporaneous with Souers was Benjamin Franklin's bosom friend, Edward Duffield, whose tall clocks are still to be met with in and around Philadelphia. Whether Duffield assisted Franklin in constructing some of the apparatus with which he conducted his "natural philosophy" experiments is not quite clear, but we do know that Franklin in his will appointed him executor.

David Rittenhouse, who lived at Norriton, Pa., from 1751 to 1770 and continued his clock making in Philadelphia seven years after that, was indeed a man of parts. In addition to designing and making tall clock movements of extreme accuracy, he produced mathematical instruments that were the equal of the best European products, and was an astronomer of international reputation. After forsaking clock work he entered public life. Among other posts he held that of director of the United States Mint from 1792 to 1795. For seven years he was president of the American Philosophical Society, then, as now, the nation's outstanding learned society.

Although New York City, in Bogardus, had the second colonial clock maker, it never developed any men of distinction. Actually, it had to

turn elsewhere for the builder of its first public clock. So it was that Benjamin Hanks, of Litchfield, Conn., 1778-1785, built the city's first communal timepiece. This was installed in the turret of the Old Dutch church at the corner of Nassau and Liberty streets. The movement had several novel features. Among them was a windmill attachment for winding.

At this same time north of Boston the outstanding clock maker was Thomas Lister of "Halifax, British North America." For 42 years, 1760-1802, he produced tall clocks of fine quality both as to case and movement. He marked his work with a label which carried the following exhortive doggerel:

> Lo! here I stand by thee
> To give thee warning day and night;
> For every tick that I do give
> Cuts short the time thou hast to live.
> Therefore, a warning take by me,
> To serve thy God as I serve thee:
> Each day and night be on thy guard,
> And thou shalt have a just reward.

Such were the principal clock makers of our Colonial and Revolutionary periods. The begin-

nings of the Massachusetts and Connecticut schools of clock making date from the Revolutionary years. With the Willard family of Grafton, Roxbury and Boston, the craft started about 1765 and continued for nearly a century. Their great contribution was the banjo clock, patented in 1802 by Simon Willard. It was a distinct departure from current clock design both as to movement and case. Here at last Yankee ingenuity had solved the problem of a timepiece as accurate as the best tall clocks, in a form and size that could readily be hung on the wall. In this respect Simon Willard differed from his two older brothers, Benjamin and Aaron, who evidently did not hold with new ideas.

Although Simon was the inventor of the banjo clock, he was a master maker of tall clocks and movements of special design. In 1801 he made a clock for the United States Senate, so unusual of design that he had to go to Washington to show the authorities how to operate it. For this timepiece he was paid $770. Unfortunately it was destroyed when the British burned Washington in 1814. On his trip to the capital he met Thomas Jefferson, then President, and a genuine friendship sprang up between them. In 1826 he made

the turret clock for the University of Virginia, which was fabricated according to the specifications drafted by the author of the Declaration of Independence. Another of Willard's quasi-public positions was the care of the clocks at Harvard college. As he was a self-educated man, this connection with a seat of learning appealed greatly to him, and he presented the institution with two examples of his best work. They are still in use. One is the tall clock in the faculty room, and the other the banjo-regulator in University Hall.

Until 1805 Willard not only made his clocks but peddled them from house to house. From then until he retired in 1839 he stayed in his shop in Washington street, Roxbury. During these thirty-four years he received a number of important commissions, including the clock still running in Statuary Hall in the National Capitol. His reputation, however, did not bring him a competency, and at his death his estate was less than $500. His son, Simon Willard, Jr., continued his father's business but moved it to Boston. He maintained his store at 9 Congress street until 1870. He frequently marked his clocks Simon Willard & Son. The younger Willard,

like the artist Whistler, was a West Point man. He was a student at the Military Academy from 1813 to 1815. In 1816 he resigned his army commission and was in the crockery-ware business until 1824. The next two years he spent in his father's shop and then launched out for himself. The business evidently prospered, for in 1850 his son, Zabdiel A., was admitted to partnership. Simon, Jr., in addition to his regular line of banjo clocks, made the astronomical clock now in the observatory of Harvard University. This for many years provided the standard time for all New England railroads.

Others of the Willard family included Aaron, Jr., Benjamin F., Ephraim, Henry and Philander J. In the matter of clock cases Simon Willard the elder, as well as his brothers, exercised distinct control over the cabinet makers who produced them. Such men as Charles Crehore of Dorchester, Henry Willard of Roxbury and William Fiske of Watertown produced clock cases according to designs supplied to them. Usually cherry or mahogany was the wood used. Ornamentation was provided by inlay and brass balls, urns or spikes used as finials. The Willard

banjo clock was so popular that in time many other New England clock makers copied it. A complete list of these copyists has yet to be compiled but would, I believe, total twenty-five or thirty names.

The same ship that brought the chests of tea for Boston's famous party had as a passenger Thomas Harland, mentor of the Connecticut school of clock makers. He proceeded at once to Norwich, Conn., where Eli Terry became one of his apprentices. Terry in time started the plan of making shelf clocks which could be sold for modest prices. In fact, the Naugatuck valley of Connecticut during the first half of the nineteenth century was the nation's clock shop. Timepieces made here were soon being sold by Yankee peddlers in every state and territory. Overseas, traders carried them to nearly every port of Europe, South America, Africa and the East.

Working independently, Terry made his first clock in 1792. The movement was of wood, hand-fashioned with few tools. Soon afterward he devised a water-driven "engine" for cutting the wooden cogwheels and in 1797 took out his first and only patent. By 1807 he was contract-

ing to make 400 thirty-hour clock movements at four dollars each.

In 1809 was founded the first of the famous Connecticut clock partnerships. It was Eli Terry, Seth Thomas and Silas Hoadley and was styled Terry, Thomas and Hoadley. This firm lasted but a year. By 1814 Terry was making his well-known "pillar and scroll top" model, which proved so popular that it was soon copied by all other men of the clock valley. From then until 1824, Terry clocks were the standard of the trade. Although Terry and Thomas, a Terry licensee, were working independently, they dominated the industry.

In Seth Thomas clock making found not a man of inventive originality but rather one of keen business sense who was the first to transfer his calling from a craft to an industry.

Seth Thomas was born at Wolcott, Conn., August 19, 1785. After a few terms at a district school he was apprenticed to the trade of carpenter and joiner and worked for some time on the construction of the Long Wharf at New Haven. At twenty-one with a small kit of tools and a still smaller sum of money he entered the firm of Terry, Thomas and Hoadley. By 1813

he was in business for himself at Plymouth Hollow and the next year having paid Eli Terry $1000.00 for a license commenced making the "pillar, scroll top" shelf clock which the former had just perfected. From then on his business grew steadily. In time he added a cotton mill as well as a brass rolling and wire plant to his commercial ventures. In 1853, so that his clock business might not be interrupted by his death, Thomas formed the Seth Thomas Clock Company which is the only one of the Naugatuck Valley clock making ventures to continue in the hands of the original family.

In 1824 a new figure entered the field. Chauncey Jerome, like Seth Thomas and Silas Hoadley, came into clock making via the cabinet bench and clockcase. In many ways he was the most picturesque and pathetic of this group of men. With little or no schooling he was at nine a fatherless boy working sixteen hours a day for a hard-hearted farmer. Four years later, released from this indenture, he was following the trade of carpenter and from that he naturally drifted into clockcase making. By 1822 he had his own small shop in which he made cases but the difficulty in getting movements for them led him, in 1824, to

form a partnership with his brother, Noble Jerome and Elijah Darrow. Brother Noble was the movement maker of the firm. The next year they brought out a "patented bronze looking-glass clock."

About twelve years later the idea of a clock with a stamped brass movement came to him, which not only brought him a fortune that he later lost, but revolutionized American clock making. Wooden works were henceforth a thing of the past.

"One night I took one of my clocks into my room," he wrote in recounting how this idea came to him, "and placing it on the table left a light burning near and went to bed. While thinking over my own business troubles and disappointments, I could not help feeling very much depressed. I said to myself I will not give up yet, I know more about the clock business than anything else. That minute I was looking at the wooden clock on the table, and it came into my mind instantly that there could be a cheap, one-day brass clock that would take the place of the wooden one. I at once began to figure on it, the case would cost no more, the dials, glass and weights and other fixtures would be

the same and the size could be reduced. I laid awake nearly all night thinking the new thing over. I knew there was a fortune in it. . . .

"I arrived home from the South the 28th of January and told my brother, who was a first-rate clock maker, what I had been thinking about since I had been gone. He was much pleased with my plan, thought it a first-rate idea, and said he would go right to work and get up the movement which he perfected in a short time so that it was the best clock that has ever been made in this or any other country. There have been more of this same kind manufactured than any other in the United States. What I originated that night on my bed in Richmond has given work to thousands of men yearly for more than twenty years, built up the largest manufactories in New England and put more than a million dollars in the pockets of the brass makers, 'but there is not one of them that remembers Joseph.' "

This brass-movement, Jerome clock with its simple case was a success almost at once. The movement was all its author claimed it to be. The case had a mahogany veneer front of O G moulding lines that appealed to a public using

decadent American Empire furniture, itself replete with the same type of moulding. By 1841 Chauncey Jerome was the sole owner of his clock company, having bought out brother Noble and Darrow. That year his net profit was $35,000. So great was the demand that "men would deposit money before orders were finished." Three years later he opened a clock-case factory at New Haven. The next year his movement factories at Bristol burned. He then moved his entire business to New Haven. For eleven years Jerome was sitting on top of the world. His factory turned out 200,000 clocks a year; he successfully invaded the British market despite the Board of Trade; and was elected Mayor of New Haven. In 1855 the crash came. The Jerome Manufacturing Company had absorbed the Terry and Barnum company, of which P. T. Barnum, the Circus King, was the backer. The previous debts of this company proved too much of a load. The Jerome company failed. The balance of Chauncey Jerome's life was spent in obscurity and he died in very straitened circumstances. He always blamed Barnum, while Barnum, himself nearly ruined, was clever enough to convert the episode into good advertising for his temperance

lecture and his American Museum. Out of the debacle came the New Haven Clock Company headed by Hiram Camp, nephew of Chauncey Jerome and forebear of Walter Camp, who later combined coaching Yale's football teams with clock making.

In the main this is the story of clock making in the Naugatuck valley. The Terrys, Seth Thomas and Chauncey Jerome were the outstanding principals, but there were others in the field whose ability and success could with justice be recounted if space allowed. Also the many clock shops which sprang up in various parts of the country were largely founded by men who had learned their trade back in the Clock Valley, the birthplace of a real idea—inexpensive clocks for the common people.

(*Dr. George P. Coopernail*)

PLATE LII.—A SIGNED HITCHCOCK CHAIR.

PLATE LIII.—AN AARON WILLARD MANTEL CLOCK.

CHAPTER VII

FROM FURNITURE TO POLITICS

REMEMBERING the scores of Americans who have risen to national prominence and lasting name from humble beginnings, the question—what about furniture makers?—naturally propounds itself. Thanks to a long line of authors of juvenile books on "Poor Boys Who Became Famous," we recognize that no honest trade is a bar sinister to future preferment.

Thumb as you will these success stories about our national heroes and half heroes, if credit to furniture making is your goal you will not attain it. Why, is not evident. If a Boston candlemaker's shop, a French Huguenot's silver smithery, a tailor's bench in the North Carolina backwoods, or the Miami Canal towpath could serve as stepping-stones to fame, why not the cabinet bench for at least one? As a setting for a first scene in a praiseworthy adventure through life, surely a background of rough planks with saws,

chisels and planes for properties and an aroma of bubbling glue for incense could be didactically effective. But our historic success writers seem to have thought differently and possibly lost something by this oversight.

The making of furniture, however, did play a very active part in the youth of two men whose names later passed into history, and secondarily in that of no less a person than Abraham Lincoln. His father, Thomas, although generally credited with being an ineffective if not shiftless man, really had a trade and it was a branch of cabinet making. Two other politicians, Stephen A. Douglas and "Boss" Tweed likewise served their apprenticeship at the bench. Such is the trio that furniture making can claim for its own.

With all the minute research that has been devoted to Abraham Lincoln and his parents, it is strange that only once has it been brought to light that Thomas Lincoln's trade was that of making the nicely constructed spinning-wheels used in converting retted and hetchled flax into linen thread ready for the loom. For this we are indebted to Arthur E. Morgan now president of Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio. Some

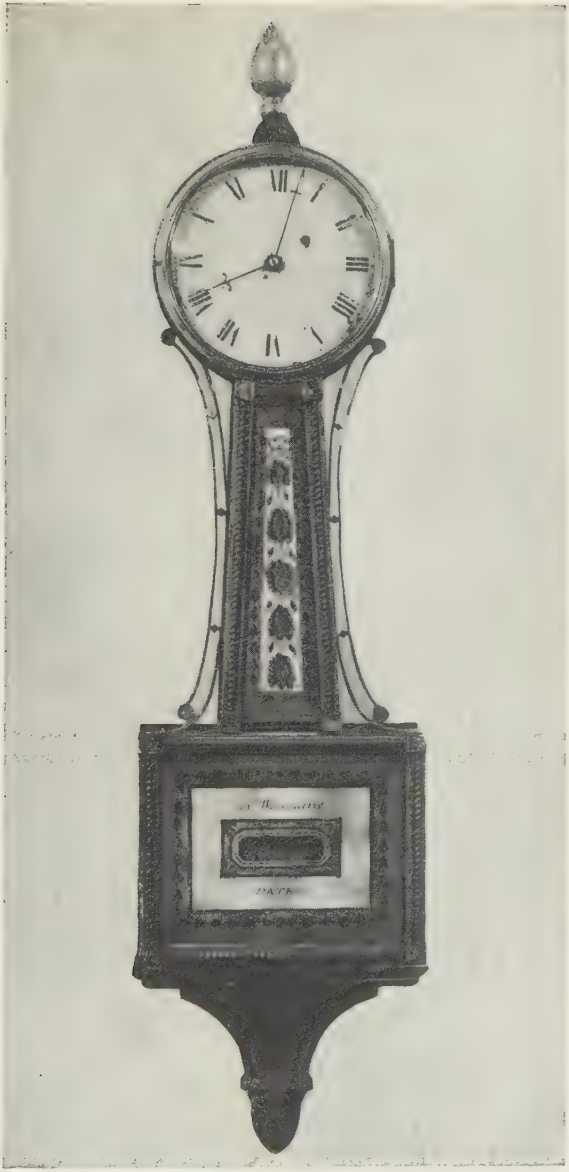
twenty years ago while a civil engineer directing a reclamation project in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas, Dr. Morgan came to know some of Abraham Lincoln's relatives on the Hanks side of the house. To them the father of the Great Emancipator was "Uncle Tom." This is what the doctor at Jasper, Arkansas, related about Thomas Lincoln, spinning-wheel maker. "Uncle Tom was a wheelright. In them days it was a pretty good trade. You see in them days every family had to have a big spinning-wheel and a little wheel. Uncle Tom made the little wheels. In a family where there were several girls they had sometimes three or four wheels."

The only other Thomas Lincoln furniture anecdote that Dr. Morgan records in his article, "New Light on Lincoln's Boyhood," published in the *Atlantic Monthly* of February, 1920, deals with a four-post bed of his own make. Here is the description of it as given by the old doctor: "Uncle Tom told her (the second Mrs. Thomas Lincoln) all about the bed he had, how it stood so high from the floor on four corner posts and had a top bent over so. . . . . ., and it was only a hickory one he had made himself. And the fine top was hickory pole that come up from behind

the bed, and he had bent it over and bored a hole in the wall and put it through the hole. You see, he was a wheelwright and could do good work at such things."

A second verification of Thomas Lincoln's cabinet making capacities is to be found in the records of the Little Pigeon Regular Primitive Baptist Church at Gentryville, Indiana. Then it was a simple log cabin structure and Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln were members in good standing. In fact, the elder Lincoln made for his church a pulpit and other fittings. Still existent records of this church leave no doubt as to this. Thus, from two independent sources enough is known of Lincoln's furniture making to establish him as a member of the craft plying his trade according to the standards of his pioneer surroundings. Perhaps some day a documented Lincoln piece will be discovered. It would add much to the human side of American furniture making.

This Lincoln connection with furniture is doubly interesting. First it shows us that Father Thomas was both a wheelwright and master of a branch of cabinet making that called for nicety of workmanship, for the small linen wheels were



(Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

PLATE LIV.—A SIMON WILLARD BANJO CLOCK.

(*Antiques*)

PLATE LV.—AN ELI TERRY MANTEL CLOCK.

carefully turned out and well-balanced. Frequently the spokes and other turned parts were decoratively ornamented with fancy turnings. The elder Lincoln must have had an appreciative eye, for such lathe work was, in his day, done with few or no patterns. A steady hand, a keen eye and an exact memory were then demanded of any who would work at the lathe.

Further, it is an interesting coincidence that Lincoln's foremost political rival should also have had a furniture-making background. That Stephen A. Douglas, popularly nicknamed "The Little Giant," once worked at the trade seems to have been forgotten. Evidently this was not so at the time of the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates. In them we find Lincoln driving home the punning observation that although Douglas may have been a cabinet maker he did not know how to make a Cabinet.

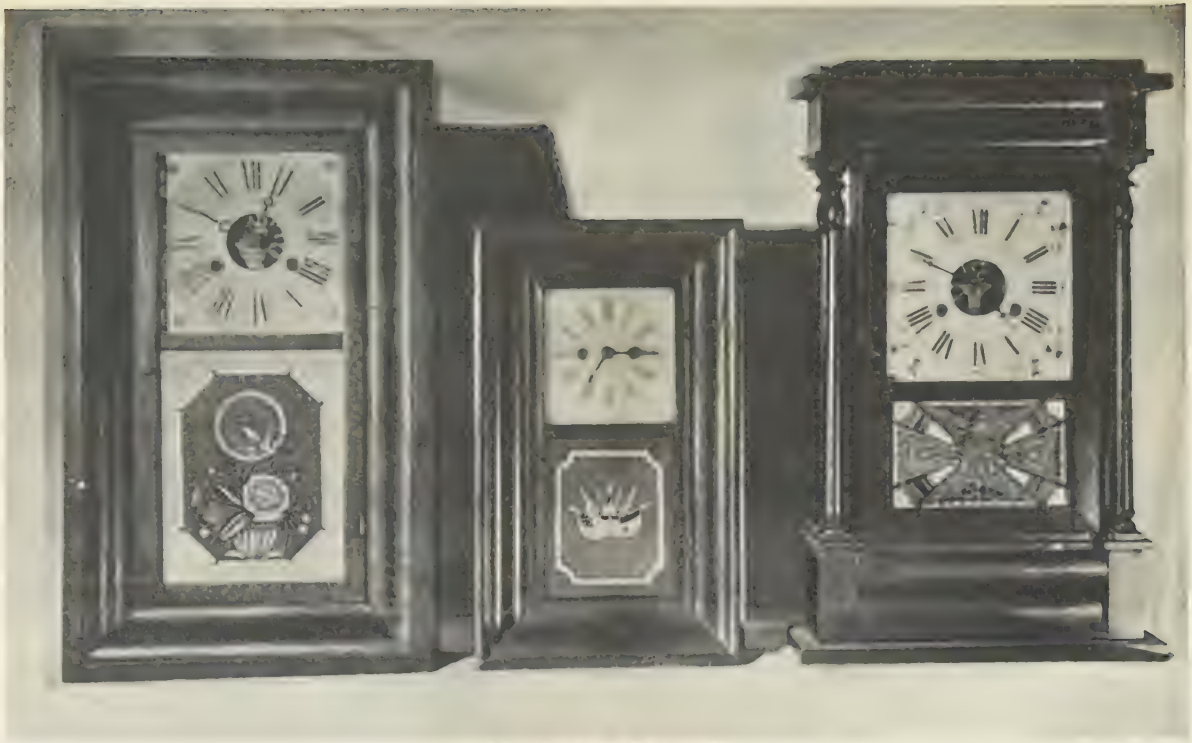
For many years in that part of Vermont where Douglas was born and grew up, there has been the rumor that he was once a cabinet maker but exactly where and for how long was lost information. Proof fortunately is to be found in the Little Giant's incomplete autobiography. This, written when he was about thirty-five, remained

in manuscript until recently published by the Illinois Historical Society. In it he tells of his birth at Brandon, Vermont on April 23, 1813, the death of his physician-father, Stephen Douglas, when his son was only two months old and the hard struggle of the family after that. Although grandfather Squire Douglas was an influential citizen of Brandon he seems to have given very little thought to his widowed daughter-in-law and her son and daughter.

"Upon the death of my father," wrote Douglas in his hastily prepared and never completed story of his life, "my mother moved to a small farm left her by her father about three miles north of my native village, and resided with her brother Edward Fisk, who was an industrious, economical, clever old bachelor, and wanted some one to keep house for him. Here I lived with my mother and uncle upon the farm until I was about fifteen years of age, and then determined to select some other mode of living. I thought it a hardship that my uncle would have the use of my mother's farm and also the benefit of my labour without any other equivalent than my boarding and clothes. I, therefore, determined upon leaving my home and true friends,

and see what I could do for myself in the wide world among strangers. My mother remonstrated, warned me of the dangers and temptations to which young men are exposed, and insisted upon my selecting some trade or engaging in some business that would give me a steady home and regular employment. I promised to comply with her wishes, that is, keep good company, or in other words keep out of bad company, avoid all immoral and vicious practices, attend church regularly, and obey the regulations of my employer; in short I promised everything she wanted, if she would consent to my leaving home. Accordingly in the Spring of 1828, being about fifteen years of age, I bid my mother, sister and uncle farewell, and left home for Middlebury, about fourteen miles distant, and engaged to learn the cabinet making trade with one Nahum Parker. I put on my apron and went to work, sawing table legs from two-inch planks, making wash stands, bed steads, etc., etc. I was delighted with the change of home and employment. There was a novelty about it that rendered it peculiarly interesting. My labor furnished exercise for the mind as well as the body. I have never been

placed in any situation or been engaged in any business which I enjoyed to so great an extent as the cabinet shop. I then felt contented and happy, and never aspired to any other distinction than that connected with my trade and improvements in the arts. Towards the end of the year I became dissatisfied with my employer in consequence of his insisting upon my performing some menial services in the house. I was willing to do anything connected with the shop but could not consent to perform the duties of a servant in the house. A difficulty soon arose between Mr. Parker and his wife and myself, and resulted in my leaving him and returning home. So much was I attached to the life of a mechanic, I could not content myself at home and soon got a situation in the shop of Deacon Caleb Knowlton, a cabinet maker in Brandon, my native village. I remained with my new employer about a year, and pursued my business strictly, as all the apprentices in the shop were required to do. Whilst I lived with Mr. Parker I formed a taste for reading, particularly political works, by being associated with a number of young men who spent their time nights and Sundays in reading and study. At this time politics ran high in the presi-



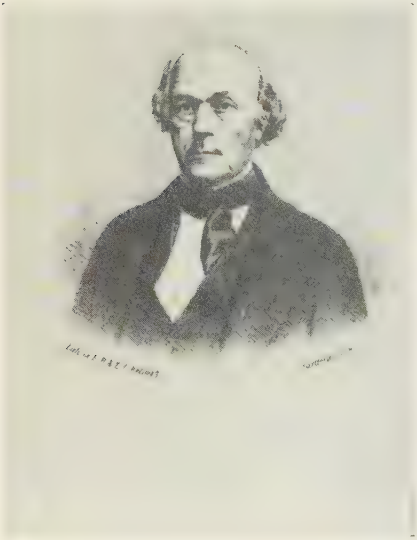
(Dr. George P. Capernail)

PLATE LVI.—TYPICAL CONNECTICUT CLOCKS.

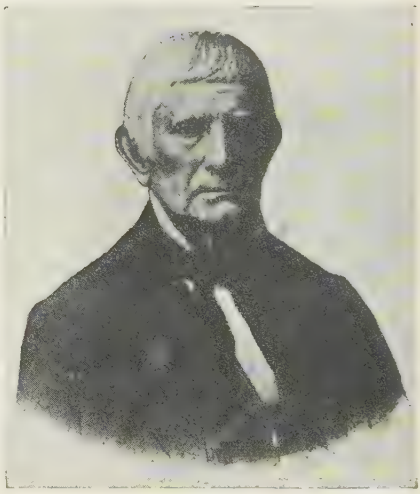
The makers, left to right, were Seth Thomas; New Haven Clock Company; and Chauncey Jerome.

Simon Willard

Eli Terry



Chauncey Jerome



Seth Thomas

PLATE LVII.—THE CHIEF YANKEE CLOCKMAKERS.

dential election between General Jackson and J. Q. Adams. My associate apprentices and myself were warm advocates of General Jackson's claims, whilst our employer was an ardent supporter of Mr. Adams and Mr. Clay. From this moment my politics became fixed, and all subsequent reading, reflection and observation have but confirmed my early attachment to the cause of Democracy.

"In the winter of 1829 and 1830 I was taken sick and compelled to return home. My physicians informed me that my physical strength was too feeble to enable me to work at the cabinet business, and that it would be necessary for me to select some other occupation. Finding my health too feeble to work in the shop. I commenced going to school."

Politically, this illness had far reaching effects for it was followed by school-teaching days in central New York and migration to Illinois, where further school-teaching led to the practice of the law and his advent into politics, which is a part of his life that has no close relationship with furniture.

Just what sort of furniture came from Douglas' hands during his apprenticeship under

Nahum Parker and Deacon Caleb Knowlton is a question that has interested me for a long time. While I was at Middlebury College, one of the Civil War veterans of the town showed me an Empire chest of drawers that had the signature "Steph. A. Douglas" scratched on the pine of the back of one of the drawers. This, with a cradle and a light-stand of curly maple, was made by him during his days in Middlebury for his friend Isaac Williamson, who had just married.

Stephen A. Douglas Made This Cradle While a Cabinet Maker's Apprentice in Middlebury, Vt.

In the hope of locating other Douglas furniture I wrote to his grandson, R. D. Douglas. He replied at length explaining that upon the Little Giant's death, his second wife carefully packed away various articles and letters that had belonged to him for her two stepsons, but the building in which these were stored in Wash-

ington burned not long afterward and all was lost. Therefore, in thinking about Douglas and his furniture, we will have to be content with the cradle and chest of drawers, although undoubtedly there are still in the possession of various old Middlebury and Brandon families some Douglas-made pieces or ones upon which he worked. Perhaps among my pieces bought in Middlebury I have acquired one that is of Douglas origin but who knows? For furniture is mute.

William Marcy Tweed, the man who later earned the title "Boss" Tweed, unlike Douglas, was born to furniture making. His grandfather, Philip Tweed, migrated with his wife to New York in the middle eighteen hundreds from Kelso, Scotland. By trade he was a blacksmith. In 1790 his son Richard was born and in due time was apprenticed to Thomas Ash, an outstanding Windsor chair maker, who was also head of the city's volunteer fire department and treasurer of Tammany Hall. His apprenticeship over, Richard set up in business for himself at 24 Cherry Street. He prospered, married, and moved to No. 1 Cherry Street, the house where George Washington had lived resplendently

during part of his stay in New York as President. Here it was on April 3, 1823, that Boss Tweed arrived in the world, and it is in this part of the city that he always lived. His boyhood was one of ups and downs. At eleven, the family funds being at low ebb, he went to work in his father's shop. He stayed there for two years. Then came a year as errand boy for Isaac Fryer, harness and hardware dealer. Next, the Tweed fortunes having improved, he spent a year at the boarding school of Rev. John Taylor Halsey. It was at Chilton Hill near Elizabethtown, New Jersey, and was a quality school for New York boys.

Then he returned to New York and, before twenty-one, was back at the paternal trade with a shop of his own. Chair making, however, was too prosaic to satisfy the future Boss. By 1847 we find him organizing the famous Americus No. 6 volunteer fire company. Such fire companies were social institutions. Prominence in them frequently led to more important activities. By 1849, Tweed was the assistant foreman of this fire company and two years later its foreman, as well as a ward politician to be reckoned with. Soon, under his guidance, members of this fire

(*Ernest F. Hagen*)

PLATE LVIII.—A CHAIR OF BOSS TWEED'S MAKE.

CHAIRS! 325 PEARL ST.,

AND

CHAIRS! 12 RIDGE ST.

WILLIAM M. TWEED,

SUCCESSOR TO

TWEED & BROTHER,

Wholesale Dealers in

FINE GILT AND VARIEGATED COLORED

CHAIRS,

A LARGE ASSORTMENT BOXED SUITABLE FOR THE

CUBA & WEST INDIAN MARKETS.

WOOD, CANE RUSH, WILLOW & STRAW SEAT CHAIRS,

SUITABLE FOR

HOTELS, PARLORS, AND PUBLIC OFFICES,

Constantly on hand and made to order, PACKED AND SHIPPED ON THE SHORTEST NOTICE.

325 PEARL ST., adjoining Harpers' Building

AND

12 RIDGE ST., NEW YORK.

(*New York Historical Society*)

PLATE LIX.—A RARE ADVERTISEMENT OF TWEED'S CHAIR BUSINESS. FROM A NEW YORK CITY DIRECTORY, JUST BEFORE HE RETIRED TO POLITICS.

company and their friends constituted the picturesque Americus Club with summer quarters at Indian Harbor, Greenwich, Conn. From then on, he devoted more and more time to municipal affairs, but he did not forget his fire company. When, in 1852, its first member died he gave his company a lot in fashionable Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn. Again, in 1860, he was on hand to lead the Americus boys in the torch-light procession held in honor of the Prince of Wales.

As Tweed's political influence expanded so did his chair-making venture. After his father's death the business was first styled Tweed and Brother. Then, it became William M. Tweed. At the last it required all of the five-story building at 357 Pearl street, next door to the famous publishing house of Harper and Brothers.

In 1858 Tweed forsook chair making to devote himself to that practical brand of politics which ever since has been identified with his name. The story of the Tweed Ring and the final downfall of the Boss does not concern furniture. Whatever his political faults and crimes, his chairs were well made and up to the standard of design of the day. During his earlier days he worked at the bench himself along with six or

eight journeymen. He made the usual line which included mahogany side-chairs of Empire design known to the trade as "three-quarter chairs," others of curly maple with cane seats, and many less expensive ones with saddle-shaped wooden seats, which were, of course, Windsor chair descent. Tweed also made various kinds of meeting-place benches.

These chairs and benches, Tweed, like other chair makers of New York, sold to the furniture dealers "in the wood," that is unvarnished and without caning or upholstery. Retailers had their own varnishing rooms and workshops for caning or upholstering. Such was the custom of the day. Of Tweed's work, I have been able to find only two very old men who could speak from first hand knowledge. They tell me that his chairs were well known and considered the equal of any then being produced in New York.

Unfortunately Tweed did not label his product but by a strange piece of good fortune the late Ernest Hagen, the cabinet maker to whom we owe the first steps in the rediscovery of Duncan Phyfe, bought six chairs from Tweed when he turned from chair making to politics. These chairs have continued in the Hagen family and

give us an excellent idea of the type that Tweed made. There is a further Phyfe-Tweed coincidence. They are both buried in Greenwood Cemetery and their graves are no further apart than were their shops during their active years of furniture making.

Although no furniture style or innovation of design can be credited to Thomas Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas, or William Marcy Tweed, it is, I feel, worth while to record their furniture making activities. They were of the craft, and the story of Early American furniture would lose human interest without them.

Broadly speaking, Early American furniture began with the Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth, and ended with the days of Alamo and its imperialistic consequences—a span of nearly 220 years. During this period we have journeyed in furniture from the Tudor of Elizabethan England to our own adaptation of the Empire mode of Napoleonic France.

The reader will find in the following eight pages (161-168)

A PICTORIAL OUTLINE OF AMERICAN FURNITURE

For detailed description of the illustrations, see List of Illustrations in the front of the book.

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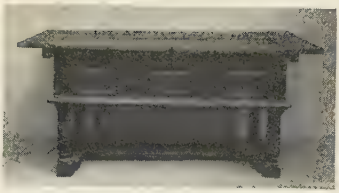

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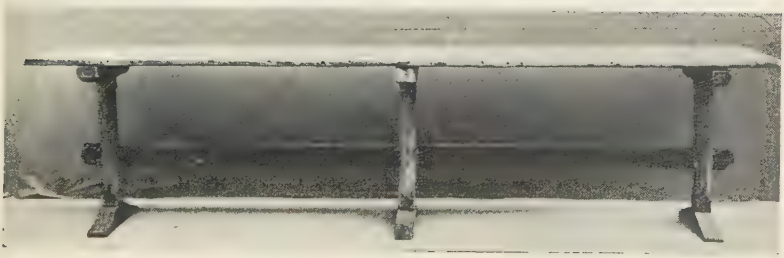

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PLATE LX.—PURITAN FURNITURE.

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PLATE LXI.—EARLY 18TH CENTURY.

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PLATE LXII.—AMERICAN CHIPPENDALE.

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PLATE LXIII.—PHYFE FURNITURE.

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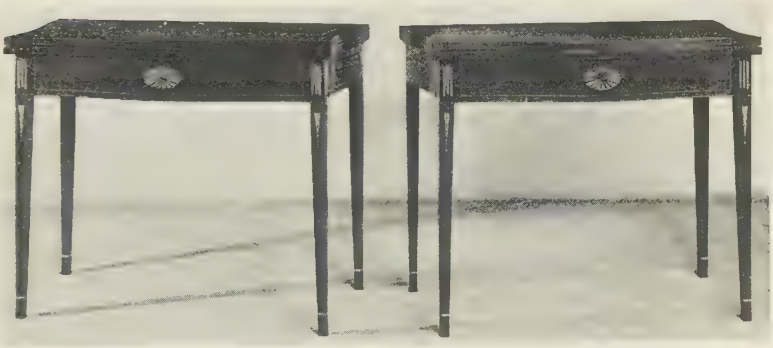

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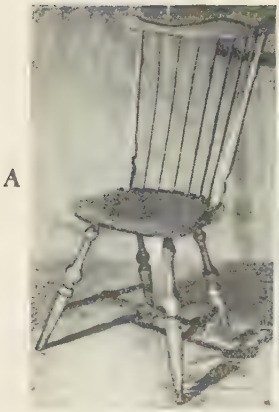
PLATE LXIV.—HEPPLEWHITE-SHERATON ERA.



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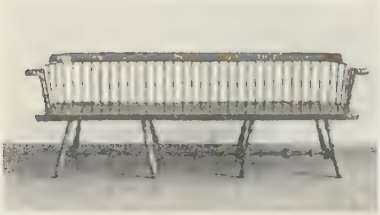

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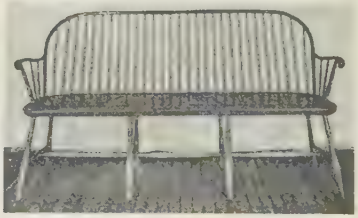

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PLATE LXV.—WINDSOR CHAIRS.

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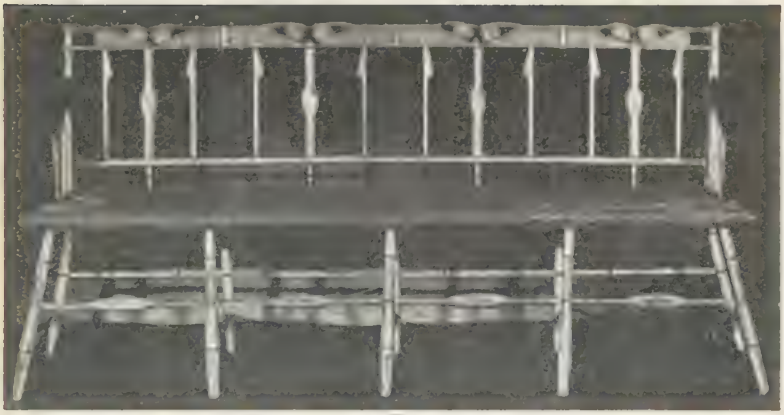

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PLATE LXVI.—FANCY CHAIRS.

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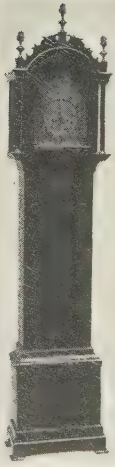

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PLATE LXVII.—TYPES OF CLOCKS.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF AMERICAN FURNITURE MAKERS AND CLOCK MAKERS

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF AMERICAN FURNITURE MAKERS

Winslow, Kenelm, 1599-1672
Alden, John, circa 1600-1687
Disbrowe, Nicholas, circa 1612-1672
Jenney, Samuel, working 1633
Mason, Roger, working 1635
Dix, Samuel, working 1637
Lindsey, Daniel, working 1637
Storey, William, working 1637
Johnson, Jonathan, prior 1700
Poor, Samuel, prior 1700
Ward, Miles, prior 1700
Allis, Capt. John, working 1702
Townsend, Job, 1699-1765
Gautier, Andrew, 1720-1784
Savery, William, 1721-1787
Goddard, John, 1723-1785
Townsend, John, circa 1730-1800
Frothingham, Benjamin, circa 1734-1790
Tuttle, James C. working 1740
Egerton, Matthew, 1739-1802
Gostelowe, Jonathan, circa 1744-1795
Randolph, Benjamin, working 1762-1792
Richmonde, —, working 1763
Willett, Marinus, 1740-1830
Seltzer, John, 1749-1831

McIntire, Samuel, 1757-1811
Rank, Johann, 1763-1828
Toppam, Abner, 1764-1836
Egerton, Matthew, Jr., — -1837
Goddard, Thomas, 1765-1858
Phyfe, Duncan, 1768-1854
Chapin, Aaron, working 1783
Ash, Thomas, working 1786-1815
Connelly, Henry, 1770-1826
Mills & Deming, working 1790
Rawson, Joseph & Son, working 1790-1800
Burling, Thomas, working 1790-1800
Webb & Scott, working 1790-1800
Lawton, Robert, working 1794
Wadsworth, John, working 1796
Buttre, William, working 1810
Seymour, John & Son, working 1800-1810
Fredericks, Charles, working 1815
Brown, William Jr., working 1818
Cowperthwaite, John K., working 1818-1825
Palmer, William, working 1818
Hitchcock, Lambert, working 1818-1843
Allison, Michael, working 1820
Hubon, Henry, working 1820
Lincoln, Thomas, 1778-1851
Douglas, Stephen A., 1813-1861
Tweed, William Marcy, 1823-1878

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF AMERICAN CLOCK MAKERS

Bogardus, Everadus, working 1698
Davis, William, working 1683
Souers, Christopher, working 1724
Parmalee, Ebenezer, working 1726-1740
Duffield, Edward, working 1730
Cheney, Benjamin & Timothy, working 1745-1780
Rittenhouse, David, working 1751-1770
Lister, Thomas, working 1760-1802
Harland, Thomas, working 1773-1830
Willard, Benjamin, 1743-1803
Willard, Simon, 1753-1848
Willard, Aaron, 1757-1844
Willard, Ephraim, working 1777-1805
Hanks, Benjamin, working 1778-1785
Terry, Eli, working 1793-1818
Willard, Alexander T., working 1800-1840
Thomas, Seth, 1785-1859
Hoadley, Silas, 1786-1870
Jerome, Chauncey, 1793-1860
Willard, Simon, Jr., 1795-1874
Willard, Benjamin F., 1803-1847
Jerome, Noble, working 1820-1840
Willard, Aaron, Jr., working 1823-1863
Willard, Philander J., working 1825-1840
Willard, Zabdiel A., working 1841-1870

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Author of "Early American Furniture Makers"

Mr. Ormsbee is a native of Brooklyn, having been born there in 1890. After attending local schools he went to Middlebury College, where he was graduated with the degree of A.B. in 1915, and, as he says, *magnum cum labore*. He took a job then as cub reporter on the *Brooklyn Eagle*, and from there graduated to publicity work in various social and commercial enterprises. At present he is with the Associated Business Papers, New York, and is secretary of the National Conference of Business Paper Editors.

Although primarily an advertising man, he comes by his interest in furniture and early cabinet makers honestly. All his life he has been an observant student of the subject, and articles by him have appeared in the leading magazines devoted to American antiques. He has also lectured on his specialty before varied audiences, and has served as expert advisor to collectors and manufacturers of reproductions. His work on "Early American Furniture Makers" is thus the product of an avocation which is rich in experience.

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BY THOMAS E

With 314 ILLUS

The Victorian furniture collector's VADE MECUM, his bible for constant, on-the-spot reference IN-THE-FIELD—providing quick, positive identification of any Victorian piece produced in this country between 1840 and 1880, telling what it is, what its distinguishing characteristics are, what its approximate value is today—and including hundreds of fascinating, little-known details about the creations of one of America's favorite furniture periods.